

HEGEL ON
PHILOSOPHY
IN HISTORY

EDITED BY

RACHEL ZUCKERT
AND JAMES KREINES

Hegel on Philosophy in History

In this volume honouring Robert Pippin, prominent philosophers such as John McDowell, Slavoj Žižek, Jonathan Lear, and Axel Honneth explore Hegel's proposals concerning the historical character of philosophy. Hegelian doctrines discussed include the purported end of art, Hegel's view of human history, including the history of philosophy, as the history of freedom (or autonomy), and the nature of self-consciousness as realized in narrative or in action. Hegel scholars Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Sally Sedgwick, Terry Pinkard, and Paul Redding attempt to vindicate some of Hegel's claims concerning historical philosophical progress, while others such as Robert Stern, Christoph Menke, and Jay Bernstein suggest that Hegel either did not conceive of philosophy as progressing unidirectionally or did not make good on his claims to progress: perhaps we should still be Aristotelians in ethics, or perhaps we are still torn between sensibility and reason, individuality and social norms; perhaps capitalism has exacerbated such problems.

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In honor of Robert Pippin
Admired teacher, scholar, philosopher

On ne reçoit pas la sagesse, il faut la découvrir soi-même après un trajet que personne ne peut faire pour nous, ne peut nous épargner, car elle est un point de vue sur les choses. Les vies que vous admirez, les attitudes que vous trouvez nobles n'ont pas été disposées par le père de famille ou par le précepteur, elles ont été précédées de débuts bien différents, ayant été influencées par ce qui régnait autour d'elles de mal ou de banalité. Elles représentent un combat et une victoire.

– Marcel Proust

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Abbreviations

Hegel

References to Hegel's works in German are to the *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970). The *Encyclopedia*, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and *Philosophy of Right* are cited by paragraph or section (§) number, followed, where relevant, by "R" to indicate a "remark" (Anmerkung) of Hegel's, or "Z" to indicate an "addition" (Zusatz) from Hegel's lectures.

- EG *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*. 1971. Translated by W. Wallace and A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Werke volume 10.
- EL *Encyclopaedia Logic*. 2010. Translated by K. Brinkmann and D. O. Dahlstrom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Werke volume 8.
- EN *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*. 1970. Translated by W. Wallace and A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Werke volume 8.
- PhG *Phenomenology of Spirit*. 1977. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Werke volume 3.
- PP *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*. 1986. Translated by A. V. Miller. Edited by M. George and A. Vincent. Oxford: Blackwell.
Werke volume 4.
- PR *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. 1991. Edited by Allen W. Wood. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Werke volume 7.
- VGP *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. 1995. 2 vols. Translated by E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
Werke volumes 18–20.

- VL *Lectures on Logic, Berlin, 1831.* 2008. Translated by C. Butler. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Vorlesungen über die Logik, Berlin 1831. 2001. Transcribed by K. Hegel. Edited by U. Rameil and H. C. Lucas. Hamburg: Meiner.
- VPA *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art.* 1975. 3 vols. Translated by T. M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Werke volumes 13–15.
- VPG *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*; “Introduction: Reason in History.” 1975. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Werke volume 12.
- VPN *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur: Berlin 1819/20: Nachgeschrieben von Johann Rudolf Ringier.* 2002. Edited by M. Bondeli and H. N. Seelmann. Hamburg: Meiner.
- VPR *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.* 1962. 3 vols. Translated by E. B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson. New York: Humanities Press.
Werke volumes 16–17.
- WL *Hegel’s Science of Logic.* 2010. Translated by G. di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Werke volumes 5–6.

Kant

Translations of Kant’s works in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, citing volume and page number to the Akademie edition (Ak) of Kant’s works in German, except with the standard A/B references to the first Critique.

- A/B *Critique of Pure Reason.* 1998. Translated by P. Guyer and A. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ak volumes 3–4.
- Ak *Kants gesammelte Schriften.* 1902–. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- C Correspondence. 1999. Edited and translated by A. Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ak volumes 10–13.
- EE *Posthumously published first introduction to Critique of the Power of Judgment, by Immanuel Kant.* 2000. Translated by P. Guyer and E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ak volume 20.

- KpV *Critique of Practical Reason*. 1996. *Practical Philosophy*. Edited and translated by M. J. Gregor with introduction by A. W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ak volume 5.
- KU *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. 2000. Translated by P. Guyer and E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ak volume 5.
- P *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as a Science*. In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, edited by H. Allison, 29–170. 2010. Translated by G. Hatfield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ak volume 4.
- TP “On a Recently Prominent Tone of Superiority in Philosophy.” In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, edited by H. Allison, 425–46. 2010. Translated by P. Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ak volume 8.
- UE “On a Discovery Whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason Is to Be Made Superfluous by an Older One.” In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, edited by H. Allison, 271–336. 2010. Translated by H. Allison. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ak volume 8.

Introduction

Rachel Zuckert and James Kreines

Few philosophers, if asked to explain what philosophy is, would reflect explicitly about its relation to history or historical change. Yet philosophers are clearly influenced by their own times, and philosophy itself – its doctrines, aims, and methods – changes significantly through history. By contrast to most philosophers, Hegel is famously responsive to this fact about history and change: He gives a philosophical account of philosophy that emphasizes its historical character. Of course, many aspects of Hegel's account are routinely criticized; he is often said to attempt to understand human history and philosophy itself in terms of an overarching, progressive narrative, an attempt then taken to be arrogant or imperialistic, or simply impossible. But if historically situated philosophers are to understand their own discipline and practice, then Hegel's question should be faced squarely: Can we understand philosophy in a historical manner, without reducing it to a mere historical epiphenomenon?

Some philosophers may see no need to face such questions. But once the topic is broached, one can see how widely philosophers frame their work in terms of tacit assumptions about overarching historical narratives. This is equally true of those who ignore Hegel's account, and of those who reject it. And it is equally true of the two major approaches to philosophy currently, so-called continental and analytic philosophy, as well as many who work in the history of philosophy. For example, many Kantians believe that Kant's critical philosophy was a revolution, from which there is no turning "back"; there is no serious possibility that one might justifiably "revert" to precritical, realist metaphysics or ethics. Many in the continental tradition follow Kant in that respect. This narrative about the critical revolution in turn brings along preferences for certain ways of approaching philosophy. For example, some will approach it in a way that privileges versions of Kant's question about whether the mind or the world is prior when it comes to explaining the status of representations in relation to objects. Others endorse skepticism about overarching historical narratives, including Hegel's – but in a way that amounts to another overarching, progressive narrative, insofar as

they think that contemporary thought has gone beyond the need for such narratives, and that there should be no question of going “back” to providing them. Alternatively, many influenced by the successes of the modern natural sciences suggest that these successes render it now impossible to revive anything from earlier metaphysics – from Aristotle’s metaphysics, for example. They often seek to conform their practice of philosophy to the model of progress they see in the natural sciences as well. Others hold that twentieth-century advances in symbolic logic and formal methods are what distinguish contemporary philosophy “from a pseudo-science” and “give us reasonable hope of doing better than our predecessors.”¹ They will, of course, approach philosophy in light of such formal methods. In all these cases, different philosophical approaches are closely connected to (often unacknowledged) historical narratives. So it again seems important to reflect on the historical character of philosophy and on whether we inevitably conceive of current philosophical practice in light of views about its place within a larger historical narrative. Such consideration will in turn raise pressing questions: Do skeptical implications about philosophical results follow, because the choice among competing narratives and accompanying approaches to philosophy is merely arbitrary, stemming from some combination of personal preference and historical contingency? Or can we identify philosophical reasons to prefer certain views about philosophy and history over others? Does the historical character of philosophy itself set a philosophical task, as Hegel suggests?

Some might see, in the tendency of philosophers to avoid explicit reflection on history, a suggestion that systematic philosophy in general aims for an impossible kind of transcendence of history. Perhaps constructive, systematic philosophy seeks by its very nature to step out of history, specifically to separate itself from other forms of culture in achieving a timeless insight that might ground all other forms of culture – seeks, as Rorty memorably puts it, to be an “all-encompassing discipline which legitimizes or grounds the others.”² Those who find Rorty’s doubts concerning this enterprise persuasive will likely be ambivalent about Hegel: On the one hand, they may admire Hegel’s opposition to separating philosophy from other forms of culture – from art or social and political conditions. They may also want to enlist Hegel’s opposition to epistemological foundationalism in their own cause. On the other hand, they will likely also see Hegel as tragically continuing to pursue systematic philosophy, unable to draw the correct lesson about its hopelessness, and uncritically promulgating a progressive account of history in order to avoid facing that hopelessness.

¹ Williamson 2013, p. 429. ² Rorty 1979, p. 6.

But the live options are not exhausted by the alternatives of such wholesale skepticism about systematic philosophy, on the one hand, or an ahistorical account of philosophy, on the other. This can be seen clearly in the work of Robert Pippin, the contemporary philosopher who has most explicitly and extensively worked out a sophisticated Hegelian answer to Hegel's question. Pippin proposes that we conceive of the history of philosophy as tending toward modern philosophy; its aspiration to self-criticism or reflective self-grounding in particular is part of and advances the development of autonomy that characterizes human history more broadly. In part, this proposal takes the form of an extremely influential contemporary interpretation of Hegel. In part, it takes the form of a general account of a kind of historical progress, now without any straightforward, triumphant culmination in some ideal, reconciled "end of history," but rather as leading us to the "problem" of modernity, a challenge both to human beings collectively and to individuals to interpret and reinterpret their own histories, cultures, and normative claims. Pippin's view thus brings out a sense in which philosophy always belongs to history, having different possible relations to its time and the development of autonomy. Yet, remarkably, this specific sense of the historical character of philosophy leads directly away from skepticism about the prospects for systematic philosophy, for it continues in many ways the tradition of Kant and post-Kantian idealists of systematic theorizing about practical and theoretical matters, building from consideration of the character of spontaneity and self-legislation to discussion of many other philosophical questions. Perhaps more remarkably still, this endorsement of systematic philosophy does not close philosophy off from other forms of culture; Pippin's work opens up and explores rich new connections to visual art, literature, and film and engages in philosophical consideration of current social and political conditions.

Pippin's neo-Hegelian work, in other words, takes up the positive and new philosophical task Hegel formulated, and that many of his successors – from Nietzsche to Habermas – aimed to accomplish in their own ways as well. Philosophers do in fact find questions interesting, pressing, and salient in light of their historical situations, in light of the broader cultural and historical phenomena. Some systems of beliefs or values now appear unsustainable, others as "intuitive" insights or judgments that must be accommodated by any philosophical theory. Acknowledging this fact about the practice of philosophy might lead one, again, to Rortyeian skepticism. But it might lead one also to recognize a distinctive form of the most basic philosophical task of self-understanding: in Hegel's terms, to comprehend one's time in thought. It is the task of philosophy, on the conception Hegel most emphatically introduced to the tradition, to discern, to

render explicit, the implicit rational or irrational forms of contemporary culture and its historical roots and meanings, not simply to dismiss such conditions and contexts as mere facts to be transcended but to attempt to make sense of, find order in, or rationally criticize current social and political institutions, cultural practices, and correlative philosophical understandings. This is crucial to philosophical self-understanding or self-examination as well: Philosophy can understand the “intuitions” or pre-understandings by which it orients itself only if it attempts to render philosophically explicit its own situation.

Attending to Hegel’s proposals concerning philosophy in history also opens up philosophically compelling ways to understand the post-Hegelian tradition, including even anti-Hegelians, as (at least in part) a continuation and contestation of this Hegelian theme. Against some current, somewhat reductive lines of interpretation, for example, we need not take Nietzsche’s central concern to be to naturalize philosophy, so as to trim philosophical ambition. Nor that Nietzsche aimed primarily to show that philosophy unrealistically aims to transcend history, so that we would do better to be less ambitious and more skeptical. Rather, Pippin proposes that it is both interpretively and philosophically more compelling to take Nietzsche to be addressing a topic that he shares with Hegel, even if he comes to radically anti-Hegelian conclusions about it. Nietzsche too aims to address the way in which history has tended toward the realization of equal recognition of everyone’s autonomy and so equal value. But he concludes that our concern with reassuring ourselves about our modernity, in this sense, is misguided and even dangerous – in part because it is a hankering for reassurance about respects in which we have become too unambitious, reconciling ourselves to the hollow happiness invented by what Nietzsche calls “the last human.”

Similarly, Horkheimer and Adorno develop critical theory in an anti-Hegelian direction in a certain respect. They too reject the apparently triumphalist Hegelian claims concerning historical progress, and even the desire to reassure ourselves philosophically concerning such progress, taking this desire to be a symptom of an underlying obsession with instrumental control and domination. But the central task of critical theory as they conceive it is, more broadly, the Hegelian task of philosophical comprehension of one’s own culture, making explicit its rationality or (more likely) diagnosing and thereby trying to contribute to eradicating its irrational tendencies and historical origins.

More recently, Jürgen Habermas too has developed an extensive alternative approach to answering Hegel’s question about philosophy and history. Habermas seeks to carry forward what he takes to be the Enlightenment ideal of the critique of authority, an ideal he takes to be

influential within much of modern philosophy. (This is a view of the task of modern philosophy with which many contemporary neo-Hegelians agree.) But, according to Habermas, philosophers after the Enlightenment face a “central historical crossroads”: They are faced with the choice between the modern “philosophy of consciousness” or intersubjective paradigms, such as that developed in Habermas’s own theory of communicative action. To choose the philosophy of consciousness, as Hegel (as well as, surprisingly, Nietzsche, Adorno, and Horkheimer) is supposed to have done, is ultimately to blunt the force of Enlightenment critique; they “stood before alternative [and better] paths they did not choose.”³ In Hegel’s case, this faulty choice leads him to sublate civil society into the power of a state conceived on the model of a conscious subject. But again, more broadly, even in proposing this criticism of Hegel, Habermas too can be said to be attempting to fulfill the Hegelian task of philosophical reflection in the service of historical self-understanding, including justificatory or critical attention to contemporary culture, to philosophical practice within it, and to the historical trajectory both inside and outside philosophy within which it ought to be understood.

This volume is a collection of essays in honor of Robert Pippin. They address a set of issues at the center of Pippin’s own work, particularly those raised by Hegel’s attempt to understand philosophy historically, and the various philosophical reactions to that project. Each essay addresses Hegel in the context of broader consideration of the history of philosophy, and in light of the need to understand current cultural phenomena critically, historically, and philosophically. Hegel’s proposals concerning the historical character of philosophy are, as we have mentioned, a crucial early articulation of, and attempts to answer, these questions in the Western philosophical tradition, and thus they are likely sources of insight and fruitful reflection. Focusing on them also brings with it historically attuned attention to concepts that are at present dominant both in philosophical discussion and in contemporary Western culture, and that were identified by Hegel as distinctively modern: autonomy (or freedom) and self-consciousness. More broadly, practicing philosophy through engaging in the history of philosophy – here primarily about Hegel himself – allows our authors to engage in the sort of historically informed, self-reflexive thinking that, we have suggested, is so crucial for philosophy. In philosophically confronting thought from the past, one is called on not to assume that questions, arguments, positions are “behind” us irrevocably, but to consider whether, to what degree, and why that might be so, or not. Might we be able to retrieve the Hegelian

³ Habermas 1987, p. 295.

philosophical past, as Hegel aimed to retrieve central insights, particularly from Aristotle (as discussed in a number of the following essays)? Or, as those authors here who take up positions expressly “after” Hegel discuss: What about our current historical position, our artistic, social, or political context, our ongoing historical experience of the practice of philosophy might drive us to seek modifications of or to reject outright the Hegelian proposals? The history of philosophy of course can also call attention to the ways in which current philosophical discussion is framed by “intuitive” starting points or guiding assumptions about which questions are central, driving, or philosophically worthy, as those starting points and assumptions may well not be shared by philosophers of other periods. One may, through engaging in the history of philosophy, come to understand how and why such assumptions came to play the role that they do, as Hegel aims indeed to show us, for example, about the centrality of concepts such as autonomy or self-consciousness. But such study can also highlight the ways in which those starting points preclude others, or somehow rule out from the start asking other, perhaps important questions. So, we have suggested, Hegel calls our attention to the currently often unasked question of how to understand philosophy in history.

The [first part](#) of the volume includes reflections by philosophers John McDowell, Sally Sedgwick, and Ludwig Siep concerning the general Hegelian claim that philosophy, indeed all “spirit” – everything from self-consciousness to rational philosophical thought – must be conceived as embedded in history, and so somehow in historical terms. McDowell and Sedgwick can be seen as taking up two opposed positions on how to understand Hegel’s claim to situate philosophy in history.

In his essay, McDowell builds on his previous work on Hegel, where he accepts Pippin’s proposal that Hegel’s basic aim is to radicalize Kant’s idealism while defending somewhat different accounts of Kant and Hegel within the context of that shared project. Here, McDowell argues that Hegel has at base an Aristotelian conception of spirit, that is, of what we ourselves are. Thus, he argues, Hegel’s position is not compatible with a claim many contemporary interpreters – largely following Pippin – see in Hegel, namely, what McDowell calls the “collective self-making” claim. On that view of Hegel, Geist is, in Pippin’s terms, “a kind of socio-historical achievement.” Because all normativity is instituted, rather than grounded by what we “ontologically are,” *“we make ourselves into actual agents [in fact rational subjects in general . . .] over historical time.”*⁴ McDowell argues that a part of this approach goes awry, and that we

⁴ So McDowell quotes Pippin [2008a](#), pp. 42, 62, and 17, respectively, in his essay.

should not organize “our interpretation in terms of” issues about “the legitimation of normative authority” (14). On Hegel’s conception, then, “spirit” is the human form or essence, present at all stages, in all contexts, of human life, across history. This form may require historically developing conditions for its full exercise or most complete activity. Philosophy specifically may have needed to undergo a historical development to recognize the character of this essence. But spirit is not dramatically historical in the manner suggested by the self-making claim.

By contrast, Sedgwick argues that Hegel’s claims in the *Science of Logic* concerning the necessity of his results should not be understood to refer to an achievement of permanent, unrevisable, timeless truths concerning the pure forms of thought, derived in a somehow presuppositionless manner. Hegel denies that any philosopher can have entirely presuppositionless knowledge or that thought can ever have distinct, separable a priori forms. Hegel’s arguments in the *Logic* are thus firmly to be distinguished from Kantian transcendental arguments. Rather, Sedgwick suggests, the necessity Hegel claims for his logic refers to the way in which concepts or connections among them are rendered intelligible in a larger systematic whole. Such necessity is neither presuppositionless nor purely formal, but rather grounded on the prior history of philosophical thought, and connected to substantial philosophical commitments of philosophical reason (*Vernunft*). Hegel’s philosophical claims are therefore meant to be, Sedgwick contends, historically conditioned, and so fallible and revisable.

In a way combining the approaches to Hegel endorsed by Sedgwick and McDowell, Siep argues that Hegel occupies positions *both* “inside” and “outside” the stream of history: Hegel both (in McDowell’s and Sedgwick’s terms) establishes essential truths and understands himself and thinks as a historically conditioned thinker; or, in Siep’s own terms, Hegel both comments on or renders explicit the commitments and conflicts of his own culture and takes up a position beyond or immune to radical, transformative historical change. Hegel’s twin approach to philosophical practice poses a problem that we continue to be unable to solve satisfactorily – Siep argues. Namely: the position of reflective participant (“inside” culture) is insufficient to ground robust normative criticism of cultural practices or norms, while the “outside” position requires laying claim to a teleological conception of history or a completeness of metaphysical thought to which twenty-first-century philosophers do not take themselves to be entitled. Siep suggests that another element of Hegel’s procedure in the *Phenomenology* – learning from cataclysmic, emotionally charged, communal experiences of breakdown or normative failure – may be the way forward for philosophers or those who reflect on cultural norms more generally.

The essays in the [second part](#) of the volume consider aspects of Hegel's proposals concerning philosophy as a historical discipline, and his own historical-philosophical practice of philosophy, in light of questions about Hegel's relations to or interpretations of philosophical figures and movements prior to him. Paul Redding opens this section with a powerful and innovative interpretation of some key arguments in Hegel's historical conception of philosophy, and of the Hegelian view concerning the role of logic within philosophy. Against Kojève's "quasi-anthropological" reading of Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic, Redding emphasizes that this dialectic is succeeded, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by an account of Stoicism. He suggests that Hegel is here providing "a historical account of philosophy itself." Aristotle's conception of philosophy, on this view, is akin to the master's attitude, where the master seeks independence, but in a way that leaves him dependent, undercutting his own self-conception. The Aristotelian philosopher, working with Aristotle's logic, turns out to be from Hegel's point of view unacceptably dependent on a passive reception of essences. The slave, famously, was more active, in working on and changing the world – even if he cannot appreciate the importance of this as a seed of the independence sought by the master. The Stoic conception of philosophy is similar, Redding claims: Stoic logic more actively takes up and transforms its objects, now conceived not as Aristotle's worldly essences but as representations, specifically, as representations in language. And this is the lens through which we can then better understand Hegel's own famously difficult "Logic of the Concept," and the idealism, emphasized by Robert Pippin, involved in his claim there about the importance of our own transformative activity – our self-legislation – in logic and conceptual activity more broadly.

Robert Stern and Terry Pinkard return to issues opened by McDowell's essay concerning Hegel's relation to Aristotle. Stern concentrates more on Hegel's ethics but makes a case similar to McDowell's: Hegel's ethics is in many respects a version of Aristotelian perfectionism. This interpretation is supposed to rule out some popular contemporary claims about Hegel – again claims often associated with Pippin's interpretation. Especially important here is the claim that a Kantian self-legislation thesis – a kind of independence of spirit from nature – plays the central role in ethics. Where McDowell argued that even Kant is not committed to every aspect of the self-legislation thesis so central to Pippin's interpretations of both Kant and Hegel, Stern allows that Kant may be so committed but focuses on arguing that Hegel's Aristotelianism prevents him from making central to his ethics a social and historical version of that self-legislation thesis.

Pinkard seeks to defend another position in the debate about the Aristotelian and Kantian strands present in Hegel's thought, and their relationship. While recognizing the enormity of the task of showing that Hegel can and does combine a kind of Aristotelian naturalism with a strongly social and historical version of Kantian self-legislation, Pinkard seeks here to lay some groundwork for that larger project. In part, he does so by formulating the sense of Aristotelian naturalism at work in Hegel, as well as its limitations (on Hegel's view) in accounting for our own agency, or spirit. And in part, he reflects on the methods and importance of engagement with the history of philosophy. Though Pinkard's project requires approaching Hegel in twenty-first-century terms (such as "normativity" or "acting for reasons"), he argues that this need not mean distorting Hegel. Rather, it is exemplary of the best way of engaging with the history of philosophy: explaining older texts in a manner that discovers a *lingua franca* we can share with them.

Rolf-Peter Horstmann focuses on other important questions concerning Hegel's relation to Kant. In some sense of the term, Kant aims to discard or replace "metaphysics," and Hegel disagrees. Horstmann argues that it would be hasty to assume that Hegel's move here is a reversion relative to philosophical progress marked by Kant. For one thing, the premises from which Hegel builds are in some respects compelling – even where they contrast with some of Kant's own conclusions, such as those concerning things in themselves. Further, Hegel's claims – in particular, that we can comprehend what objects are in their truth, and that doing so requires understanding objects as also, in a sense, subjects – can be considered not to "regress" from Kantian insights but rather to elaborate and perfect them. Thus, Horstmann suggests, we may discern a Hegelian developmental, even teleological structure in the history of philosophy, at least in the historical development from Kant to Hegel, if not perhaps in the less than generous subsequent reception of Hegel. While such an investigation would be a larger project than Horstmann takes on here, he proposes that the history of philosophy since Hegel may have made available other, post-Hegelian ways of defending the basic Hegelian insight about objects and subjects.

Karl Ameriks likewise treats Hegel as a post-Kantian thinker, but in a rather more anti-Hegelian vein. He endorses some general Hegelian claims: As Hegel contends, philosophy ought to be understood as historical and ought to be explicit about its presumptions concerning its own history. Ameriks proposes, however, that we should look to Romantic, rather than Hegelian, forms of such engagement with philosophy and its history as our models. On Ameriks's presentation, Hegel (together with Reinhold, Fichte, and the non-Romantic Schelling) continues to endorse

an early modern (pre-Kantian) conception of philosophy, as the production of complete, certain systems of knowledge, on the model of the natural sciences (or, perhaps, even aiming to surpass them). Such systematizing, for Hegel and similar post-Kantians, is newly taken to require specifically a systematic account of human history and of philosophy within it. Ameriks suggests that one might rather follow the Romantics in understanding philosophy as a more modest and fragmentary enterprise, not attempting to provide a progressive narrative but rather presenting more focused, opportunistic, and not forcibly integrated interpretations both of its own history and of cultural history more broadly, including its own cultural moment.

The [third part](#) of the volume includes essays that likewise endorse the Hegelian aim of understanding philosophy as a historical enterprise but challenge the narrative, univocal, progressive character of the Hegelian approach in attempting to satisfy that aim. Their challenges are enunciated, in one way or another, from historical-philosophical positions self-consciously “after” Hegel.

Christoph Menke and Axel Honneth provide, first, alternative philosophical understandings, both based on Hegel and departing from him, of human history as a history of freedom. Menke argues that the tensions within the concept of autonomy, revealed in the history of modern philosophical discussion, do not vindicate a Hegelian, but rather a Marxist or Nietzschean genealogical view of history. History is to be conceived not as a rational, self-correcting process, nor as the self-actualization of autonomy, but rather as a contest between power and power. To support this contention, Menke not only traces the tensions in the previous versions of the concept of autonomy as diagnosed by Hegel but also invokes Hegel’s own concept of “second nature” to indict Hegel of a similar tension. Hegelian second nature is, Menke argues, social norms made habitual or “naturalized,” taken as given; for Hegel, he contends, it is both necessary to and necessarily rejected by self-constituting, free spirit. Spirit makes itself what it is by rejecting the socially natural, but spirit is also real in the world only by functioning as second nature, the ultimate, unquestioned norms or place where questions of justification end. Hegel’s own place in the history of philosophy should likewise not be understood, Menke implies, as a culmination of philosophical debates about autonomy, but as a new elaboration of the promise and difficulties of this paradigmatically modern concept and historical aim.

Like Menke, Honneth concurs with the Hegelian claim that history is the history of freedom. Here, as elsewhere in his work, he continues as well the Habermasian philosophical project of attempting to continue the Enlightenment tasks both of critique and of understanding and

contributing to progressive political change. Honneth suggests that Hegel should not be taken to complete or resolve a historical debate about autonomy, but rather to inaugurate a separate, insufficiently acknowledged tradition in political thought. Originating in Hegel and carried forward in the works of Marx and Arendt among others, this tradition develops, Honneth claims, a “third concept” of liberty, that of communal, collaborative mutual recognition.

J. M. Bernstein and Slavoj Žižek reflect on Hegel in light of twentieth-century political horrors. Bernstein argues that if one is to be a Hegelian after Hegel, one must not endorse a Hegelian theodicy of history, but rather Adorno’s rather more critical version of Hegel’s claim that in modernity the “real is the rational.” Instrumental reason, primarily in the form of the economic institutions of capitalism, has formed the human world in its image and has undermined the political achievement of realized freedom celebrated or promised by Hegel. Only if one does so can one recognize that Hegel’s (and Schiller’s) analysis of the ills of modernity continues to hold true: Universalizing reason fails to be reconciled to nature, to recognize and respect individuals as such, even as (paradoxically) it represents the absolutization of a natural drive, that of self-preservation. One must, then, do philosophy of history, as Hegel enjoins, but it must be one that aims to recognize historical suffering and never takes it to be superseded by or absorbed into larger arcs of historical progress.

Žižek reflects on the Hegelian claim that modernity is an age after art, or, perhaps, following Pippin, of art after the beautiful: of the abstract, ugly, sublime, and comic. He proposes a plethora of reasons, different from Hegel’s own, to endorse this Hegelian claim. The reign of scientific reason has disenchanted nature and thereby disenfranchised art as a cultural power. Abstract art is peculiarly apt at reflecting not only modern anomie, as Pippin suggests, but also the abstract institutional power of capitalist economic structures and the emptiness of contemporary consumer culture. The eruption of ugliness might be understood, on the other hand, as a Freudian or Lacanian return of the repressed. And the ethical and political disasters of the twentieth century so undermined human dignity that they can be represented not as tragic, but only as darkly, unfunnily comic. This proliferation of reasons, in response to a proliferation of unbeautiful forms of contemporary art, itself calls into question the Hegelian overarching narrative of the progress of absolute spirit that grounds Hegel’s own version of this claim.

In his contribution, Jonathan Lear more explicitly confronts Hegel with Freud’s post-Hegelian insights concerning the character of self-consciousness, narrative self-understanding, and history. He suggests

that historical stability may be achieved not by rational correction or consistency, as on a Hegelian view, but rather by irrational or defensive refusals to countenance countervailing positions. He proposes too that the Hegelian gesture to an idealized historical future, here a form of social life of true, real mutual recognition, may itself be problematically ideal, nonintegrated with the real, by Hegelian standards. Like Bernstein, then, he endorses the Hegelian aim of integration of the ideal and real, rational and nonrational but suggests that we must seek other means to do so, specifically the psychoanalytic practice of free association, of allowing the nonrational to become part of conscious life. This fine, concluding reflection reminds us of both the near-inevitability of positioning oneself and one's thought within some sort of narrative, historical trajectory and the dangers of doing so unreflectively.

Part I

Philosophy and History in Hegel

1 Why Does It Matter to Hegel That Geist Has a History?

John McDowell

1 First, what does Hegel mean by “Geist”?¹

At the beginning of the *Encyclopedia* treatment of Geist (§377), Hegel introduces knowledge of Geist as knowledge of the human: not knowledge of individual human peculiarities, but “knowledge of *the universal*, of *the human being* [*des Menschen*] and therewith essentially of Geist.”² The philosophy of Geist is the philosophy of the human being.

In the next section (§378), he remarks that contemporary treatments of Geist have no speculative content. “For this reason,” he says, “the books of Aristotle on the soul . . . are still the most excellent, or rather the only work of speculative interest on this object. The essential aim of a philosophy of Geist can only be that of reintroducing the Concept into the knowledge of Geist, and therewith opening up again the sense of those Aristotelian books.”

These remarks imply that the philosophy of Geist is the philosophy of the human soul in an Aristotelian mode. But what does that mean?

In Aristotle’s account, soul (*psychē*) is the form of a living being qua living: that which answers the question, asked of a living being, “What is it by virtue of which this is a *living* being?” Aristotle fills in the account by applying it to a hierarchy of kinds of living being, with a corresponding hierarchy of kinds of soul: the souls of plants, of ordinary animals, and of rational animals.

A kind of soul, in Aristotle’s account, is a formally distinctive way of being a living thing. In Aristotle’s hierarchy of kinds of soul, a higher level is related to the immediately lower level in the following ways. The higher level includes capacities for ways of exemplifying life of which some are also found at the immediately lower level; for instance, nutrition and reproduction, which characterize plant life, also figure in animal life. But some ways of exemplifying life are new at the higher level; thus, animals, but not plants, engage in locomotion and perception. And at the higher level, the

¹ I will leave the word untranslated, apart from some quotations, where it will figure as “spirit.”

² This translation, and that in the next paragraph, is my own.

elements that are common between it and the lower level are present in different forms; thus, nutrition and reproduction figure in animal life in forms that differ from those in which they figure in plant life. In the case of a rational animal, being the living thing it is includes capacities for the ways of exemplifying life that are characteristic of animals in general. But somewhat as locomotion and perception are manifestations of life that are not found in the lives of plants, reasoning is a manifestation of life that is not found in the lives of ordinary animals. And somewhat as nutrition and reproduction take different forms in the lives of animals from the forms in which they figure in the lives of plants, the capacities that belong to animal life in general take new forms in the presence of the capacity for reasoning. Acts of those capacities in rational animals are themselves exercises of reason.

Now here is a way of understanding those two remarks from Hegel's introduction to the philosophy of Geist: Geist is Hegel's counterpart to what figures in Aristotle as the kind of soul that is characteristic of rational animals. It is human beings whom Aristotle defines as rational animals; that corresponds to Hegel's implicit identification of the philosophy of Geist with the philosophy of the human. On this account, then, Geist is the formally distinctive way of being a living being that characterizes human beings: in Aristotelian terms, the form of a living human being qua living *human* being.

Kinds of soul in Aristotle's account are not kinds of substance. Souls are not material substances; the only relevant material substances are living beings. And one would miss the point of Aristotle's conception of the form of a living being qua living if one conceived souls as immaterial substances. So Geist in particular is not a substance, material or immaterial. The idea of Geist is the idea of a distinctive way of living a life; often it is better to speak of *Geistigkeit*, as the defining characteristic of that distinctive form of life and thereby of the living beings that live it.

2 It is individual plants that live the kind of life that is characteristic of plants, and individual animals that live the kind of life that is characteristic of animals. The idea of a living being is the idea of an individual of a certain kind, defined by the kind of life it lives. So it is individual human beings who live the formally distinctive kind of life that constitutes them as rational animals.

That may seem to tell against understanding Hegel's conception of Geist as recasting Aristotle's conception of rational animals. If we suppose the concept of Geist applies in the first instance to individual human beings, it may seem that we cannot accommodate the social note that is sounded in much of Hegel's talk about Geist.

But Aristotle already holds that human beings are essentially social. Rational animals can live the kind of life that is special to them only in certain kinds of relations to others. Just so, Hegel can acknowledge that it is individual human beings who live the distinctive kind of life that makes them *geistig*, while insisting that they can live that kind of life only in suitable relations to other human beings.

At a pivotal moment in the “Self-Consciousness” chapter of the *Phenomenology* (§177), it transpires that the object of self-consciousness is “an object that is just as much I as object.”³ Hegel remarks that with that development, the concept of Geist is before us. Contrary to a claim of Robert Pippin’s,⁴ Hegel does not say Geist is before us in the guise of “I that is we and we that is I.” He is working with a contrast between the *concept* of Geist, which is now before us, and its *actuality*, what Geist is. And he says that experience of what Geist is, “this I that is we and we that is I,” still lies ahead for the readers of the *Phenomenology*.

To insist on this is not to play down how central sociality is to Hegel’s thinking about Geist. We cannot fully make sense of the concept of an object that is I except in the context of “I that is we and we that is I.” An I thinks of itself in the first person singular, and that is not separable from thinking of itself, with others, in the first person plural. But we need not suppose the whole truth about Geist is in place for Hegel’s readers when the concept of Geist first makes its appearance. We do not threaten the centrality of the social for Hegel if we take him to be introducing the concept of Geist as the concept of a certain kind of living individual.

It can be tempting to think that even though Geist, as a kind of soul, is not an individual substance, material or immaterial, accommodating its social character requires conceiving it as a supra-individual substance. One benefit of reading Hegel as I am proposing is that it discourages this temptation. As with plants and ordinary animals, the only relevant substances here are individual living beings. The way to register the social character of Geist is to insist that the distinctive form of life that makes human beings the living individuals they are can be lived only in a human community.

3 I have pointed to a structural correspondence between Hegel’s conception of Geist and Aristotle’s conception of the kind of soul that is characteristic of rational animals. In content, Hegel’s conception goes beyond what is explicit in Aristotle. Geist is the topic of Hegel’s version of what Sebastian Rödl calls “the principal thought of German Idealism,” namely that “self-consciousness, freedom, and reason are one.”⁵ And

³ My translation. ⁴ Pippin 2011, pp. 48, 50. ⁵ Rödl 2007, p.105.

self-consciousness and freedom are not thematic for Aristotle. But we can bring them into the picture as aspects of reason, the distinctive capacity of rational animals.

Reason, the faculty, enables us to recognize and respond to reasons, for thinking or acting in some way or other. The capacity to respond to reasons is not special to rational animals, but the capacity to respond to reasons taken to be reasons is. Some things that happen in the lives of nonrational animals can be understood as responses to reasons. A prey animal's flight from a predator is a response to the reason for fleeing that danger is. But rational animals are distinctive in responding to reasons self-consciously.

The capacity to speak is integral to this. If a human being is acting for a reason, she can say what she is doing and why. "Rational animal" in Greek is "*zōon logikon*," which might equally be translated "language-using animal."

And self-conscious rationality, the capacity to think or act in light of what one takes to be reasons, coincides with freedom in a certain sense. If one's thinking or acting is determined by considerations to which one attributes the authority of reasons, one is autonomous, self-governing. I will come back to this.

4 I have suggested that for Hegel the philosophy of Geist concerns human beings as such. It is hard to make that cohere with a pervasive element in Pippin's reading of Hegel on Geist, the idea that for Hegel Geist is "a kind of socio-historical achievement."⁶

That idea is the core of Pippin's answer to my title question. I will approach a different answer by taking issue with elements in Pippin's account of Hegel, which is the best worked out version of a genre of interpretation of Hegel that is prominent in recent discussion, largely through Pippin's influence.

Pippin's Hegel thinks the authority of norms in general is collectively instituted, in what Pippin represents as a Hegelian adaptation of Kant's idea that moral subjects are legislators of the moral law. And for Pippin's Hegel, the distinction between what is natural and what belongs in the realm of Geist is normative, not metaphysical; so Geistigkeit comes within the scope of the thesis that norms are collectively instituted. Accordingly, Pippin's Hegel thinks, in a thought "derived ... from a claim about the self-legislated character of all normativity," that "*we make ourselves into actual agents* [in fact rational subjects in general, beings

⁶ Pippin 2008a, p.42. Pippin says "as we shall see," and much of the book is an elaboration of the idea. In Pippin 2011, he applies the idea to the self-consciousness that is an aspect of Geistigkeit.

that understand themselves as subject to the force of reasons, whether practical or theoretical] *over historical time*.”⁷

But we do not make ourselves into human beings over historical time. To be human is to belong to a certain animal species: *Homo sapiens*, to be specific.

Of course human infants are at most potentially rational animals; if they are biologically defective, they may not have even that potential. Only mature human beings without certain sorts of biological defect are geistig. And there can be a kind of defectiveness that is not narrowly biological. To be non-defective, a human being must have been formed in a human upbringing. The wolf child (if that is what he is) in Truffaut’s film *L’Enfant sauvage* is a defective human being, and so at best marginally a subject and agent, even if, so far as his biological makeup goes, he might have become a non-defective instance of our species if he had been initiated into human life earlier.

So not just any instance of *Homo sapiens* is geistig. But that makes no difference to my point. Being a biologically non-defective human being, brought up in a normal human way, is not an achievement.

For Pippin’s Hegel, membership in our animal species is apparently a matter of mere biology, a classification entirely within the reach of our resources for thinking about nature as distinct from Geist. Pippin’s Hegel thinks we collectively situate ourselves in the realm of Geist “while remaining the natural organisms we ontologically are.”⁸ The implication is that our Geistigkeit is not part of what we ontologically are. As I noted, for Pippin’s Hegel the distinction between what is geistig and what is natural is normative, not metaphysical.

I think this misses how special the concept of the human is for Hegel. Certainly we are natural organisms. We are animals, and ordinary animals belong to nature. But our position in nature is not the whole truth about what, as human beings, we ontologically are. The concept of the human is the concept of an animal species whose non-defective mature instances are as such geistig. It effects a unified classification that places its instances not just in nature but also in the realm of Geist. Without ceasing to be the concept of an animal species, it is a categorial concept in the logical or, as Hegel says, speculative treatment of the formal character of life that Aristotle initiated.⁹

⁷ Pippin 2008a, p. 17. The focus on agency in the second quotation reflects the fact that it is rational agency that is Pippin’s topic in that book. But the “self-making” idea that he attributes to Hegel relates to rationality in general, as my addition indicates.

⁸ Pippin 2008a, p. 62.

⁹ Against the view that the concept of the human species is a concept of empirical biology, see Thompson 2004.

5 As I said, Pippin reads the doctrine of collective self-making he attributes to Hegel as an adaptation of Kant's idea that moral subjects legislate the moral law for themselves. I think Pippin misreads Kant, and that undermines the supposed inspiration for the doctrine he attributes to Hegel.

Kant famously says the will is subject only to laws of which it can regard itself as the author. Pippin remarks that "the first point to make about Kant's claim is that it is *metaphorical*."¹⁰ Taken literally, the claim would pose intractable difficulties. How could a will that is not yet subject to anything of the sort Kant calls "law" be capable of engaging in an act of legislation?

But acknowledging that the claim is metaphorical does not lead Pippin to abandon the idea of a standpoint at which the question arises whether to submit to the constraints of rationality. On Kant's behalf, he says it must be "in some way thinkable whether we subject ourselves to such constraints or not, even though attempting to avoid such requirements must also manifest that we are nonetheless already so subject."¹¹ He goes on attributing to Kant the idea that we constitute ourselves as rational wills.

Kant makes the literal significance of the metaphor clear in a passage Pippin quotes, but I think fails to appreciate. (As Pippin says, it is representative of many passages.) Kant says

it is impossible to think of a reason that in full consciousness receives direction as regards its judgments from elsewhere; for then the subject would ascribe the determination of his faculty of judgment not to his reason, but to an impulse. Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles independent of foreign influences. Therefore as practical reason or as the will of a rational being reason must regard itself as free.¹²

The second sentence here repeats the metaphor. The first formulates its literal significance: when someone is self-consciously determined in her judgments by considerations she takes to be reasons, she cannot regard that determination as an influence from outside her rationality.

Kant concludes, in a remark that prefigures his claim about "the fact of reason" in the second *Critique*, that a rational will must regard itself as free. But his point applies just as well to theoretical reason, which must equally regard itself as autonomous. (The opening statement is neutral as between practical and theoretical reason.) Kant is registering that rationality

¹⁰ Pippin 2008a, p. 70. ¹¹ Pippin 2008a, pp. 75–76.

¹² *Groundwork*, 4:448; quoted (from a translation by Lewis White Beck) at Pippin 2008a, pp. 74.

includes freedom in the sense that figures in my gloss on “the principal thought of German Idealism.”

Pippin says, “for Kant, despite the surface grammar, ‘person’ is in no sense a substantive or metaphysical category, but in some way or other, a practical achievement.”¹³ And on Kant’s behalf, about “our commitment to observing the claims of reason,” he says, “we don’t just ‘come that way,’ susceptible and responsive to such demands automatically.”¹⁴

But Kant’s literal rendering of the metaphor, to repeat, is that a rational subject cannot regard the influence on her judgments of considerations she takes to be reasons as an influence from outside her rationality. The point relates to subjects who take some considerations to be reasons. Kant is not talking about a self-determination that would result in being such a subject.

Certainly “automatically” sounds a wrong note. But for all Kant says in explaining the metaphor, we do just “come that way.” As I noted, we are not born rational subjects. But as soon as we are conscious of ourselves at all, we are self-consciously in the business of taking considerations to have rational weight in determining what to think or do, so we fall within the scope of Kant’s explanation of the metaphor. As soon as anything is a fact for us, “the fact of reason” is a fact for us. We have no work to do to make ourselves rational subjects.

Our upbringing determines which considerations we find ourselves regarding as reasons when we become self-conscious. It is a betrayal of autonomy to stay unthinkingly at that starting point; rationality brings with it an obligation to be critical of all inherited conceptions of what is a reason for what. We can reject the idea that being a rational subject is the result of an exercise of autonomy without failing to respect the Kantian thought that rationality requires avoiding dogmatism.

Two notions of freedom are in play here. When Kant invokes what is in effect “the fact of reason,” he is describing a freedom that can be in place even if it is only as a result of, for instance, her upbringing that someone takes some consideration to have rational force. That does not threaten the subject’s freedom in the sense that figures in “the fact of reason”; however she came to take the consideration to have rational force, her taking it to have rational force precludes her from regarding its role in determining what she thinks or does as an influence from outside her rationality. But she falls short of freedom in another sense, which would require acting or thinking not just in light of something she takes to be a reason but also in light of something she knows to have the rational force she attributes to it.

Suppose I take you to be acting or thinking for a reason, but I believe it is only as a result of, say, your upbringing that you regard the consideration

¹³ Pippin 2008a, p. 75. ¹⁴ Pippin 2008a, p. 85.

that moves you as a reason. In that case, my understanding of your acting or thinking as you do finds its ultimate ground not in the reason for which I take you to be acting or thinking, but rather in the features of your upbringing that, in my view, explain your regarding it as a reason.

If you are indeed thinking or acting for a reason, as I take you to be, you are free in the first sense. If that is so, your own understanding of your acting or thinking cannot have the two-level character mine has. If you yourself were to give credence to an instance of the debunking formula “It’s only because . . . that you think that’s a reason,” where “because . . .” excludes “because you recognize it as the reason it is,” you would no longer be regarding the relevant consideration as a reason; in respect of that consideration, you would no longer come within the scope of Kant’s account of the freedom that is part of being rational.

If you are free in the second sense, no explanation is more fundamental than your reason. Your taking something to be a reason is your recognizing it as the reason it is, and understanding (not just yours but anyone’s) of your acting or thinking as you do can find firm ground in the reason. No doubt there is an explanation of your being in a position to know it to be the reason it is, but that does not supplant the reason as the ultimate basis on which your thinking or acting is intelligible.

The obligation to be critical of what one finds oneself taking to be a reason is an obligation to aspire to be free in the second sense.

The supposed Kantian doctrine of an act that constitutes one as responsive to the claims of reason is not to be found in Kant’s explanation of the image of self-legislation. As I said, that undermines an inspiration Pippin thinks Hegel has for a counterpart doctrine of self-constituting, now as a collective act in history. If we try to think through the idea of making oneself a rational subject at a standpoint detached from one’s historically determined concrete being, we fall into paradoxes. Pippin expresses a hope that such paradoxes “will lead . . . back to Hegel’s more collective and historical version of such self-making.”¹⁵ But if there is no such idea in Kant, the hope of avoiding the paradoxes it brings with it should not encourage us to read a collective and historical version of the idea into Hegel.

6 Pippin thinks the “self-making” idea he attributes to Hegel is expressed in the introduction to the philosophy of Geist in the *Encyclopedia*. He finds the idea most vividly formulated in the Kehler-Griesheim notes from Hegel’s lectures on §377. There Hegel is credited with saying that the actuality of Geist is “that it has made itself into what it is,” and that “it is

¹⁵ Pippin 2008a, p. 78.

only as a result of itself that it is Geist.”¹⁶ But I do not believe such claims express a Hegelian version of the supposed Kantian idea that we constitute ourselves as rational subjects.

Here is a different interpretation. Like any kind of soul, Geist is not an inner entity postulated to account for what happens in a life of the formally distinctive kind lived by the individuals of which it is the form qua living. A kind of soul has its actuality in a life of the relevant kind. So Geist has its actuality in the acts that make up a distinctively human life. As rational, Geist is free in the sense I have found in Kant, the first of the two senses I distinguished. The manifestations of life that are its actuality are Geist itself freely in operation. That is the sense in which the actuality of Geist is Geist’s own product.

Pippin quotes a passage from the *Science of Logic* that is helpful for understanding this: “It is . . . the nature of spirit, in a much higher sense than it is the character of the living thing in general, . . . not to let a cause continue itself into it but to break it off and to transmute it.”¹⁷ Living things in general are not just conduits for causal influences that impinge on them. That is true to a higher degree with Geist. And we can add that the difference is not just one of degree. The forces operative in the manifestations of Geist are internal to Geist in a way that is different in kind from the way the forces operative in, say, an animal’s life are internal to the animal that lives it. They are internal to Geist in the way that figures in the Kantian conception of the freedom of a rational subject.

The *Encyclopedia* passages are concerned, not with a sociohistorical genesis of Geistigkeit, but with what is characteristic of Geist as a presence in the world.¹⁸ That seems a better fit for the fact that what Hegel is doing in the context is introducing Geist as the subject matter of the branch of philosophical science he is embarking on.

Taking the passages to be about a sociohistorical achievement poses problems analogous to those that beset the supposed Kantian idea of a self-constituting act. Pippin speaks of the supposed sociohistorical achievement as a transition effected when natural beings begin to find they can understand themselves only in terms of norms.¹⁹ But happenings in the lives of beings that are not yet geistig are not in historical time, in the sense that is relevant to Hegel’s conception of a history in which Geist is as it were the

¹⁶ For fuller citations, see Pippin 2008a, pp. 55–56.

¹⁷ WL, 1: 400–1; SL, 562; from the passage quoted (more fully) at Pippin 2008a, p. 38.

¹⁸ At Pippin 2008a, p. 113, he says, “Several passages make very clear that spirit itself for Hegel represents a distinct kind of historical, social achievement,” and he goes on to “quote at length from the most decisive of such passages.” But this “most decisive” passage (again from the Kehler-Griesheim notes) does not mention history or collective activity.

¹⁹ See Pippin 2008a, p. 46 and pp. 111–12.

protagonist. It does not help with this to insist that the supposed transition to *Geistigkeit* is collectively undertaken. These problems go away if we accept that in Hegel's introduction to the philosophy of *Geist*, he is not talking about how *Geist* came into being. (No doubt something could be said about that, but it does not belong to history in the relevant sense.) Hegel's topic is what is distinctive of *Geist* as actual.

7 As I said, Pippin thinks the "self-making" idea he attributes to Kant is an application of the thought that norms in general are self-imposed. I have argued that the self-making idea is not Kant's. And I think that goes also for a conception of normativity in general as instituted, the supposed basis for the self-making idea.

Kant's literal rendering of his claim that reason must regard itself as the author of its principles is, to repeat, that reason cannot regard what it conceives as the rational force of a consideration as an influence from outside itself. As I explained, the claim is right even in a case in which it is only as a result of (for instance) her upbringing that someone takes a consideration to have rational force. The only normative notion in play here is the notion of the authority a subject attributes to a consideration she takes to have rational force.

What Kant calls "the moral law" is a formal condition that is necessary (not sufficient) for it to be legitimate to attribute rational force to a consideration. He derives the condition from the fact that reason must regard the rational force it attributes to considerations as internal to itself, and the derivation abstracts from all specificity in the content of considerations a subject takes to have rational force. That is what it means to say the moral law is legislated by pure practical reason. This is not a thesis that normativity in general is instituted.

I said that the only normative notion relevant to Kant's claim about reason's authorship of its laws is the notion of the authority a subject attributes to something she takes to be a reason. It seems unpromising to explain that notion in terms of the idea that normativity in general is instituted. The authority someone attributes to reasons is explained, one reason at a time, by what she would say to justify taking the relevant consideration to have rational force. She would not make a general claim, about institution or anything else; she would say something specific about the consideration, giving for instance an account of what is pursuit-worthy about some end, or of why some inference form is truth-conducive.²⁰

²⁰ See Pippin's approving citation of Thomas Nagel at Pippin 2008a, p. 71, n. 11. As Pippin does not see, Nagel's point undermines the idea that the force of reasons is an instituted normative authority. I do not believe rejecting this idea contradicts anything in what Kant does with the self-legislation image.

Kant's claim about authorship is not the beginning of a general theory of what it is for the authority attributed to a putative reason to be legitimate, and it does not point to any need for such a theory.

As with the self-making idea, the absence from Kant of a thesis that normativity in general is instituted undermines a supposed ground for a feature of Pippin's reading of Hegel: the idea that Hegel transposes a Kantian thought that normativity in general is self-imposed into a social and historical context. Elaborating Hegel's supposed transformation of a Kantian idea, Pippin says Hegel's "'theory of the Concept' is his theory of normativity . . . and that theory . . . is some sort of a self-legislative theory."²¹ In line with that, Pippin thinks history serves for Hegel as the frame in which he offers legitimations for that supposed self-legislation. He speaks of Hegel's

decision . . . to take these general claims about self-legislation and self-imposition much more seriously, and then to try to work out some theory of the true normative status of such self-legislation. Whereas Kant held out some hope for a deductive demonstration of a norm's actuality, or objectivity or bindingness, Hegel's procedures in all his books and lectures are developmental, not deductive . . . The proof procedure shifts from attention to conceptually necessary conditions and logical presuppositions to demonstrations of the partiality of some prior attempt at self-imposed normative authority . . . and the subsequent developments and reformulations necessary to overcome such partiality.²²

But I have argued that the normative status of self-legislation is not a Kantian theme, and I do not believe it is a topic for Hegel either. I think organizing our interpretation in terms of the legitimation of normative authority (terms that are not Hegel's own) distorts our understanding of Hegel, in particular of the developmental procedures Pippin mentions.

8 I will illustrate that with what Pippin makes of Hegel's response to the *Analytic* of Kant's first *Critique*.

Kant thinks any possible empirical knowledge is structured by principles that are not derived from experience but are internal to the spontaneity of the understanding. We *must* judge in accordance with these principles.

In keeping with his attributing to Kant a concern with the legitimacy of norms, Pippin conflates that thought with the thought that we *ought* to judge in accordance with these principles, that they reflect *normative proprieties*.²³

²¹ Pippin 2008a, p. 97. ²² Pippin 2008a, pp. 109–10.

²³ See, for instance, Pippin 2011, p. 8, where he speaks of "rules about what ought to be judged, how our experience ought to be (must be) organized" – as if the "ought" and "must" modalities are interchangeable. Later on the same page, he implies that the only

In Pippin's reading, Kant's argument in the Transcendental Analytic is an attempt at a deductive vindication of those supposed normative proprieties. Pippin's Hegel thinks Kant's attempt is flawed, contrary to Kant's official stance, by dogmatism: in particular, by not taking seriously enough the thought that any normativity is self-imposed. And Pippin's Hegel replaces Kant's argument with a historical account, tracing how it has come about that we attribute authority to, or rather confer authority on, the norms that govern our practices of empirical judgment, through a succession of responses to internal failures in previous conceptions of norms for empirical judgment.²⁴

This account of a relation between Kant and Hegel is vitiated by the conflation of a *must* with an *ought* that it starts from. Kant's argument is only incidentally concerned with norms. That undermines the supposed motivation, in how Hegel takes Kant to go wrong, for this instance of the historical legitimation of norms that Pippin regards as Hegel's distinctive innovation.

In the so-called Metaphysical Deduction, Kant gives a list of the forms of judgment. In the Transcendental Deduction, he argues that experience can be of objective reality only because it is informed by counterparts to those forms. Objective reality can present itself in experience only in forms corresponding to the forms of judgment. And for any of the forms in which objective reality can present itself in experience, there must be a corresponding principle for empirical knowledge.

If the forms on Kant's list are what he takes them to be, the forms in which discursive thinking must take place, they are not forms in accordance with which we *ought* to engage in empirical judgment – as if it would be possible to judge otherwise than in those forms, but only at the price of not thinking as one should. Forms such that an activity counts as thinking only if it is informed by them do not constitute *proprieties* for empirical judgment.

To bring proprieties for judgment into the picture, Pippin, as I said, conflates a *must* with an *ought*. Here is something he says that brings those two modalities together:

To be as clear as possible, we do not have an option or choice about [for instance] the necessary distinguishability in our experience between accidental succession and causal succession. Experience would not be possible were there not this distinguishability, Kant argues in the Second Analogy. But this necessity is conceptual, not psychological (no concept of experience would be intelligible without

alternative to conceiving these "rules" as "psychological laws of thought," which is certainly not Kantian, is to suppose that they "involve a responsiveness to normative proprieties."

²⁴ See, for instance, Pippin 1999, ch. 3, especially pp. 66–67.

the distinction and it being possible in principle for experiencers to make it), and we *do* actually have to determine *which* successions are accidental and which causally necessary, and this requires the activity of judgmental discrimination. We can thus get this wrong.²⁵

At the beginning of this passage, Pippin is acknowledging a *must*. At the end, he is pointing to an *ought*, a norm that can be violated. Given a form such that there must be empirical judgments informed by it, for instance, the form of judgments of causal succession, it is possible to go wrong in making judgments of that form. In that instance, it is possible to judge that a succession is causally necessary when it is accidental. One ought not to do that; if one does so, one is violating a norm.

But such norms are not the focus of Kant's argument. The point of the argument is not to legitimate their authority.

In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant aims to show, as I said, that experience is enabled to be of objective reality by being informed by counterparts to the forms of judgment. He is not concerned with norms for judging correctly, conditions for getting objective reality right. He is concerned with a role he attributes to the understanding in our having objective reality in our sights at all.

Why does Kant need a transcendental argument for the thesis that being informed by counterparts to the forms of judgment is what accounts for the possibility that experience is of objective reality? The need is a consequence of his doctrine that the understanding must have objects provided for it by sensibility, which is external to it. The formal requirements for thinking are internal to the understanding, the power of thought; as Kant puts it, they have their source in the pure understanding, where "pure" means "independent of sensibility."²⁶ The doctrine that the power of thought must have objects provided for it from outside, by sensibility, makes it an urgent question for Kant how requirements that are internal to the power of thought can be conditions for *sensory consciousness* to be of objects, as opposed to merely conditions for us to be able to bring an objective reality that anyway impinges on us, in operations of sensibility, within the reach of our power of thought, as if conformity to those requirements just selects, from a more extensive reality that is anyway present to our senses if not to us, the elements that our understanding can handle. That is the question Kant tries to answer in the Transcendental Deduction.

²⁵ Pippin 2011, p. 8, n. 2.

²⁶ This does not mean they are a self-imposed constraint. They are not a constraint at all. It is not a constraint on thinking that we cannot think except in ways that are required for what we are doing to count as thinking. See section 9.

What Pippin says in the passage I quoted is right to this extent: if a form of thought is such that any empirical knowledge must be constituted, in part, by judgments informed by it, empirical knowers must have a practice of making judgments with that form, and, since judging subjects are not perfect, it must be possible to go wrong in engaging in that practice. So a successful execution of Kant's project would have a bearing on norms for empirical judgment of the kind Pippin exemplifies when he notes that we can get things wrong in judging successions to be causally necessary.

But this bearing on norms for judgment would be a mere by-product of executing Kant's project. Kant aims to establish and specify a set of forms such that there must be practices of making empirical judgments informed by them. Given such a practice, it is routine that there is a norm that governs it: in Pippin's example, the norm that one should judge a succession to be causally necessary only when it is. If we must engage in the practice, there is no further question about the authority of the norm. Kant's transcendental work addresses the necessity of the practice.

9 It is true that Kant's argument lapses into dogmatism. But how exactly?

There is no dogmatism in conceiving the forms of thought as forms in which we must think, forms whose status as requirements is not up to us to impose on ourselves. If the forms that figure on Kant's list are what he thinks they are, we do not betray our freedom in acquiescing in that *must*. Perhaps it might be suggested that to acquiesce is to abdicate from a freedom to refrain from thinking. But not thinking is not a possible choice for us.²⁷ And anyway the freedom that matters in this context is our freedom *in* thinking, the spontaneity of the power of thought. If there are limits to what can count as thinking, it is not a restriction on our freedom in thinking that we can exercise it only within those limits.

Kant's lapse into dogmatism comes not in working with a conception of requirements for thinking that are not up to us, but in accepting his list of the forms of discursive thought from the existing practice of logicians. To avoid "positivity," we should display the forms of thought as emerging with an internal necessity, in a self-unfolding by the power of thought itself. That is what Hegel does in his logic.

Displaying the forms of thought as emerging in a self-unfolding by the power of thought cannot but be developmental. But the development in Hegel's exposition of logic is not historical. What is superseded when the

²⁷ Not thinking is a fate to be feared, which may befall us, or rather may befall something we may become in circumstances in which *we* are no longer really on the scene.

exposition progresses from one form of thought to another is not a conception of thinking that was characteristic of an earlier stage in history. The development is progress in our understanding of what thinking is, not a series of steps from past understandings of what thinking is to more recent understandings of it, culminating in what we now take thinking to be.

And validating norms for judgment is not the point of Hegel's logic, any more than it is the point of Kant's transcendental argument. Kant's argument is directed at the thought that, to put it in the provocative way he sometimes allows himself,²⁸ the power of knowledge dictates to nature, rather than conforming its achievements, in respect of their form, to nature conceived as independently formed. Hegel's logic culminates in his version of that thought, which serves as the bridge to the *Realphilosophie*: nature, in respect of its form, is the self-externalization of the logical Idea.²⁹

Hegel's logical concepts – what he calls, collectively, “the Concept” – are successors, in a way, to Kant's categories, in that they correspond to forms of thought. But there is a fundamental difference: Hegel rejects Kant's idea that the power of thought needs objects given to it from outside, so the question Kant responds to in the Transcendental Deduction does not arise for him. For Hegel logic, the study of the forms of thought, is already, just as such, what figures in Kant as transcendental logic, the study of the forms of thought insofar as thought is of objects. For Hegel that “insofar as” qualification adds nothing. Logic is the study of the forms that enable thought to pertain to objective reality, and for Hegel that comes to the same thing as the forms that enable thought to be thought at all.

This difference between Hegel's logical concepts and Kant's categories affords a straightforward interpretation of Hegel's claim that the Concept gives itself actuality. For Hegel a logical concept, a specification of the Concept, does not need objective purport secured to it by an argument that connects the power of thought with something external to it, as in Kant's transcendental argument. In corresponding to a form that informs exercises of the power of thought, a Hegelian logical concept is already equipped with what Kant calls “objective validity.” It has objective purport of itself; it gives itself actuality.

That is very different from what Pippin makes of the claim that the Concept gives itself actuality.³⁰ Pippin puts the claim in the context of his reading of the claim that Geist is its own product. Sometimes he seems to

²⁸ For instance at B163.

²⁹ This is not the alarming claim it might seem to be. See Pippin 2008a, p. 44: “If [nature] is a manifestation of anything it is of the concept, and that is a claim about its ultimate intelligibility.”

³⁰ See Pippin 2008a, ch. 4.

treat them as the same claim.³¹ He frames the claim about the Concept in terms of a difficulty about the possibility of conceptual content, to which he takes Hegel to respond with the conception of normativity as instituted.³² I do not believe he makes it clear what difficulty he thinks Hegel has about the possibility of conceptual content.³³ Kant has a problem that can be described in those terms, which he addresses in the Transcendental Deduction; but as I have explained, Hegel does not have Kant's problem. In any case, I have argued against the basis on which Pippin's reading of the claim about the Concept rests, the idea that a conception of normativity in general as collectively instituted is central to Hegel's thinking.

10 Pippin thinks the history of Geist is a succession of progressively less partial attempts at communal self-legislation of norms, serving for Hegel as a developmental replacement for attempts at deductive legitimations, which he finds in Kant.³⁴ I have argued against the basic elements of this reading.

So what is the significance for Hegel of the fact that Geist is what history is about? Why is modernity important to him?

Not all Hegel's developmental procedures are historical. I have mentioned his exposition of logic as one that is not. I think the same is true for most of the *Phenomenology*. The development in the *Phenomenology* is not historical until the Geist chapter, where, as Hegel notes, we start to consider transitions, not from one mere shape of consciousness to another but from one shape of the world to another (§441). Before that point, as in the logic, the progress is in our understanding, here of how subjectivity relates to its objects.³⁵

³¹ See Pippin 2008a, p. 96, where, in discussing the claim that the Concept gives itself actuality, he cites Hegel saying that "the universal property of *spirit* is that it actualizes those determinants which it possesses in itself" (VPG, 57; my emphasis).

³² See Pippin 2008a, ch. 4, especially pp. 97–102.

³³ He tends to talk (e.g., at Pippin 2008a, p. 108) as if there just obviously is, for anyone, a problem that can be described as "the problem of actual content" or "the problem of objectivity."

³⁴ See the passage from Pippin 2008a, pp. 109–10 quoted in section 7.

³⁵ At Pippin 2008a, p. 110, describing Hegel's developmental procedures as expounding successive overcomings of "the partiality of prior attempts at self-imposed normative authority," Pippin says the *Phenomenology* contains "accounts of the experience of such partiality and the lived implications of such partiality." Compare Pippin 1999, p. 67. In suggesting that the experience of partiality is *lived*, with no indication that this is restricted to the Geist chapter, Pippin implies that throughout the *Phenomenology* the experience that undoes a shape of consciousness is a historical phenomenon. That misses how special Hegel's use of "*Erfahrung*" in the *Phenomenology* is. In the Introduction (§§86–7), he explains that it is his term for the dialectical reflection in which a shape of consciousness realizes its inadequacy. Experience in that sense need not be lived (except as dialectical reflection in a study or classroom is lived) until the transitions in the Geist chapter.

But in the Geist chapter of the *Phenomenology*, and in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel gives (among other things) historical narratives that culminate in modernity: in particular, in the latter work, the modern state.

To understand why this history matters to Hegel, we need the distinction I drew between two notions of freedom. The first is freedom as it figures in “the fact of reason.” Freedom in that sense is part of being a rational subject; it is in play whenever a human being regards a consideration as having rational force, however her so regarding it is to be explained. Someone is free in the second sense when the explanation of her taking a consideration to have rational force is that she recognizes the rational force it has.

As a feature of a life, freedom in the second sense comes in degrees. The more one’s life is led in light of considerations one knows to have the rational force one attributes to them, the freer one is. Pippin’s Hegel thinks that in being less free than modern people, ancient Greeks (for instance) were agents to a lesser extent.³⁶ But that conflates the two notions. Ancient Greeks were less free in the second sense. But to be an agent, or in general a rational subject, is to be free in the first sense. And freedom in the first sense belongs to human beings, embodiments of Geist, as such: ancient Greeks no less than modern agents.³⁷ A life that is free in the second sense is, not exactly a sociohistorical achievement, but an individual achievement made possible by modernity, which is a sociohistorical development. Geistigkeit, and so freedom in the first sense, is not.³⁸

Freedom in the first sense consists in regarding as internal to one the force of considerations one takes to be reasons. It contains the idea of freedom in the second sense, since it makes room for the question whether a consideration really has the rational weight one takes it to have. Freedom in the first sense is a potential for freedom in the second sense. What Hegel thinks is new in modernity is that modern human beings are in a position to actualize that potential.

³⁶ Pippin 2008a, p. 55.

³⁷ Pippin says (Pippin 2008a, p. 55): “When Hegel makes his famous claim that moderns are ‘freer’ than Greeks, he does not just mean politically freer; that we better realize a capacity that they also had. He means we have become freer, more capable of realizing the capacity for freedom.” Certainly the point is not just that we have more political freedom. But the capacity for freedom that we are more capable of realizing is a capacity the Greeks also had, just because they were human.

³⁸ Certainly some lives have less scope for freedom in the first sense than others. But being in chains, literally or figuratively, is being restricted in one’s ability to exercise one’s agency, not having the status of an agent to a lesser extent than someone who is not in chains. And it was not true of premodern people as such that they were restricted in their exercise of agency.

In modernity, explicit consciousness of freedom in the first sense, and so consciousness of a potential for freedom in the second sense, becomes available to human beings as such, as it has not always been.³⁹ It brings with it an aspiration to actualize the potential for freedom in the second sense. And Hegel thinks modernity enables that actualization of freedom to be not just an aspiration but a real possibility.

We can get a sense of how he thinks modernity has that effect from a remark Pippin cites from PR §260: “The principle of modern states has enormous strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to attain fulfillment in the self-sufficient extreme of personal particularity, while at the same time bringing it back to substantial unity, and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself.”⁴⁰

In the modern state, which subsumes the family and civil society, subjective rationality, which is what freedom in the first sense is, can coincide with the objective rationality that is in operation when a life is free in the second sense. If someone tried to use “It’s only because you live in a modern state that you take such-and-such a consideration to have rational force” as an instance of the debunking formula I considered in section 5, it would not work. Modernity does not debunk; in the terms I used there, it explains a subject’s being in a position to recognize considerations as the reasons they are.

No doubt conceptions of how people should live changed when one shape of a human world succeeded another. And no doubt Hegel thinks our present conception is better than what it replaced. But if we discard the idea of a Hegel who is centrally concerned with the legitimacy of norms, we can see that it is in a way incidental that the superiority of modernity to previous shapes of the human world has that dimension. The progress that matters is not toward a better conception of how we should live (and think), but toward a full realization of freedom in the second sense. The significance of modernity is that in modern social and political life, unqualified self-determination is for the first time a real possibility.

³⁹ See the passage from §482 of the *Encyclopedia* quoted at Pippin 2008a, p. 94.

⁴⁰ Pippin 2008a, p. 94, n. 5.

2 Remarks on History, Contingency, and Necessity in Hegel's Logic

Sally Sedgwick

Philosophic thinking [for Hegel] is the conquest of contingency and finitude, and it is itself partly moulded by the course of the struggle.

Geoffrey R. G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel* (1940, p. 111)

In the opening quotation, Mure draws our attention to an apparent paradox. On the one hand, Hegel sets out to “conquer” contingency and finitude, as Mure says. On the other, his effort to do so is “partly moulded” by the struggle. There is at least an apparent paradox here, Mure suggests, because it seems that Hegel’s effort to conquer contingency and finitude is somehow indebted to or dependent on contingency and finitude.

My task in this essay is to shed light on the nature of Hegel’s effort, in the *Science of Logic*, to “conquer” contingency and finitude. Hegel claims both that the *development* of concepts in the *Logic* is necessary, and that the *result* of the developmental process is necessary.¹ What do these necessity claims commit Hegel to, exactly? Does Hegel allow any room for contingency in this necessity? If so, what kind of contingency?

It might be thought that the *Logic* supplies a quick answer to at least the second of these questions. In a section in which Hegel explores the conceptual connections of a number of modal categories (“possibility,” “actuality,” “contingency,” “necessity”), he asserts that contingency is a necessary “moment” of actuality [*Wirklichkeit*].² Hegel’s commitment to this claim is unambiguous enough, but his remarks in this section do not bear on the issues I wish to explore here. We learn nothing in this

¹ Hegel writes in the Introduction to his *Science of Logic* that his system of logic will lay out the “immanent coming-to-be of the distinctions and the necessity of their interconnection” (WL 5:51/Hegel 1991b, p. 55). Hegel writes that the result of his study will show that the “Idea has developed itself to be the certainty which has become truth” (WL 5:67/Hegel 1991b, p. 69). See also Hegel’s 1827 Preface to the *Encyclopaedia Logic* (“EL”), where he tells us that he conceives his task as that of demonstrating the “development of the concept” and its “logical necessity” (EL 16/30). He later tells us in that text that, “All the forms of finite thinking will be presented in the course of the logical development, and in a way such that their necessity is exhibited” (EL §24Z3).

² WL 6:207/Hegel 1991b, p. 546. See also EL §145.

discussion, for example, about his views regarding the origin of conceptual content or regarding the nature of the necessary connections among concepts. It is impossible to determine, from this discussion alone, whether he believes that contingency has a role to play in the production of either conceptual content or conceptual connections. Since this section of the *Logic* does not shed light on these matters, I will not be discussing it further in this essay.

I seek to challenge a fairly standard picture of the *Logic*, according to which Hegel's insistence that the conceptual progressions in the *Logic* are necessary is evidence that he holds that the progressions unfold with something like deductive necessity. Deductive reasoning must somehow serve as his model, and the various progressions must be products of conceptual analysis. Since the *Science of Logic* begins with the concept "being [*Sein*]," it must be the case (according to this interpretation) that Hegel endorses the view that, by means of an analysis of the concept "being," we can discover its necessary components or sub-concepts as well as its necessary implications. This interpretation appears plausible on its face, but this is perhaps because it tells us so little. Deductive reasoning is of course at work in some way in the argumentative advances of the *Logic*, and Hegel's treatment of the logical forms undeniably relies in some way on conceptual analysis.

When more fully articulated, the standard interpretation provides unsatisfactory answers to the following two questions: First, from what does Hegel believe the concepts of the *Logic* derive their meaning or content? Second, why does he take himself to be justified in claiming to know their meaning (such that he can be confident in his pronouncements, for example, about the necessity of the conceptual developments of the *Logic*)? The interpretation I am challenging answers these questions with the help of a particular understanding of the abstract and formal nature of the *Logic*. It reminds us that the *Logic* is a special science, unlike empirical investigations in significant respects. The concepts of the *Logic*, on this reading, are pure or a priori in that they derive their meaning or conceptual content from pure thought. Given at the start of the *Logic* are the most fundamental concepts and laws of thought, from which subsidiary concepts and laws are then deduced. According to this reading, the deduction proceeds by means of an analysis of pure thought.

Of course, everything depends on what we have in mind, exactly, by pure thought and by the analysis of pure thought. The interpretation I have just sketched supposes that, on Hegel's account, there can be for us concepts that are pure or a priori in the sense that both their origin and their meaning or content owe nothing to the engagement of actual thinkers with the world. Such concepts are taken to be simply supplied by the

nature of thought itself. On this reading, Hegel claims to know these concepts with necessity because he believes he can perform something like a Cartesian meditation whereby he withdraws from his worldly affairs and engages in acts of pure reflection, acts wholly unaffected by contingency and change. His derivation of the concepts of the *Logic* depends on his performing this kind of abstraction. And since his science is unlike other sciences in that it successfully abstracts from contingency, he can justifiably claim that his science is self-grounding and in this respect presuppositionless.

I am not going to deny that the *Science of Logic* is abstract and formal, but I have my doubts about a certain understanding of the *Logic*'s abstract and formal character. A central interpretative challenge in interpreting the *Logic* is indeed that of determining precisely in what its abstract and formal nature consists. We can discover remarks in the work that lend *prima facie* support to the interpretation I have just sketched. Hegel tells us, for instance, that the *Logic* belongs "not to nature or the realm of the physical [*Physikalische*]," but rather to the "spiritual [*Geistigen*]" or "supernatural [*Übernatürliche*]" world.³ Although philosophical thinking in general is "concerned with concrete objects," he says, "logic is concerned only and solely with these thoughts as thoughts [*für sich*], in their complete abstraction."⁴ Further, he writes in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, "In the *Logic* are thoughts so understood that they have no other content as what belongs to thinking itself and as what is produced through thought. In this way, the thoughts are pure thoughts [*reine Gedanken*]" (EL⁵ §24Z2).⁶

My aim in this essay is to raise questions about a certain reading of remarks such as these. I seek to challenge a particular interpretation of the form of reflection Hegel relies on in justifying his representation of concepts, in the *Logic*, and in declaring the necessity of their interconnection as well as of their progressive development.⁷

³ WL 5:20/Hegel 1991b, p. 32. ⁴ WL 5:23/Hegel 1991b, p. 34.

⁵ In this chapter, the English translations for EL are from Hegel 1991a.

⁶ See also EL §19. For similar remarks in the *Science of Logic*, see, for example, the opening paragraphs of Hegel's Introduction.

⁷ I am greatly indebted to Robert Pippin's work over the years on the Kant-Hegel relationship and would like to think that he would endorse the general line of argument I defend here. A quick reading of some of Pippin's remarks might lead us to think, however, that he interprets the formalism of the *Logic* in just the way I am challenging. We might take him to be committed to a narrowly formal interpretation of that text when he tells us, for example, that Hegel follows Kant in arguing that conditions of intelligibility "can be shown to be presupposed in any empirical determination" and are not themselves empirically derived (Pippin 2014c, p. 150, see also p. 161, and Pippin 2016). We might reach the same conclusion in light of his remark, in Pippin (ms), that as the "science of pure thinking," the *Science of Logic* is "pure in the sense that it is not aided by empirical experience." In these passages, Pippin emphasizes Hegel's debt to Kant and commitment to the view that the thought-forms of the *Logic* are in some sense nonempirical and as such have a certain

I

Where do the concepts with which Hegel is concerned in the *Logic* and out of which sub-concepts are supposed to be deduced get their meaning? How does he justify his claims about necessity? Since these questions are too large to try to answer directly, I will begin by focusing on Hegel's answer to the more manageable question he poses in the opening pages of the work: With what must the *Logic* begin? Hegel's answer to this question should help us with the larger issues for the following reason: The developmental story he provides throughout the *Logic* is supposed to require an analysis of concepts, beginning with the most general concept of all, the concept with which the *Logic* begins, namely "being" or "pure being [*reines Sein*]." Since subsequent concepts presumably emerge from an analysis of *Sein*, it should be illuminating to learn how or from what Hegel thinks this initial concept gets its meaning or conceptual content.

Notice that if we inquire into the origin of the meaning of any concept further along in the developmental story, Hegel's answer invariably calls our attention to the way in which that particular concept comes to be in response to a prior conceptual inadequacy or conflict. We see this already in his treatment of the emergence of the second concept treated in the *Logic*, the concept "nothing [*Nichts*]." Hegel argues that *Nichts* owes its origin as well as its meaning or content to the absolute indeterminacy and hence conceptual emptiness of the concept that preceded it in the discussion, the concept "*Sein*." *Nichts*, in other words, emerges as the result of our adequately thinking through the implications of *Sein*.

Given that Hegel explains the emergence of concepts subsequent to *Sein* with reference to prior conceptual inadequacy or conflict, we might wonder why the starting point of the *Logic* should be any different. It is

autonomy. But in discussions in which Pippin seeks to distinguish Hegel from Kant, his interpretation lines up more obviously with mine. In ch. 6 of *Idealism as Modernism*, for example, Pippin describes Hegel's deduction of the notions of the *Logic* as a "radicalization" of Kant's conception of categoriality (Pippin 1997b, p.168). The radicalization is tied to Hegel's *denial* of reason's "independence" or "supreme authority" (Pippin 1997b, p. 162). Instead, the "Hegelian experiment . . . involves entertaining and thinking through the view that, in accounting for the fundamental elements of a conceptual or evaluative scheme, there is and can be no decisive or certifying appeal to any basic 'facts of the matter,' foundational experience, logical forms, constitutive 'interests,' 'prejudices,' or guiding 'intuitions' to begin or end any such account. We can appeal only to what we have come to regard as a basic fact or secure method or initial orienting intuition" (Pippin 1997b, p. 163). What we come to regard as a basic fact, moreover, itself depends on "ways of looking" that evolve (Pippin 1997b, p. 168). In "Hegel and Category Theory," Pippin explicitly opposes the view that the development of the categories of Hegel's *Logic* is a mere and wholly "self-enclosed" "thought-game" (1990, p. 844). These remarks suggest an interpretation in line with the interpretation I argue for in this essay, since one of my aims is to suggest – at least obliquely – that for Hegel (in contrast to Kant) no sharp line between the empirical and the a priori can be drawn.

true that *Sein* is the concept with which the *Science of Logic* begins, but why should we suppose that *Sein* – or Hegel's treatment of it – is simply given or appears from nowhere as self-evident or self-grounding? Why should we in other words suppose that Hegel believes he can explain the necessity of *Sein* (or the necessity of his starting point in the *Logic*) without the help of a developmental story, without relying on prior commitments or assumptions?

Hegel sometimes seems to give us reason for assuming that he considers his starting point in the *Logic* in precisely this way. He tells us in the 1812 Preface to his *Science of Logic*, for instance, that his science will “make a completely fresh start [*von vorne anzufangen*].”⁸ In his Introduction, he writes that his *Logic* is unlike other sciences in that its beginning is “absolute” and as such not dependent on “presupposed” definitions and assumptions.⁹ These remarks encourage the impression that Hegel intends the beginning of his *Logic* to be presuppositionless. Its starting point is absolute in that it is somehow self-grounding and self-evident.

But a closer look at these passages reveals that they do not support the interpretation just outlined. Hegel is concerned in these remarks to draw our attention to what distinguishes his scientific procedure from other (purportedly) scientific procedures. Other sciences, he points out, typically take their methods and assumptions for granted; they are not in the business of investigating their presuppositions. A properly “philosophical” science, however, takes seriously the problem of how to begin.¹⁰ It cannot simply assume that its presuppositions are valid; it must establish their validity. Hegel does not imply here that, since his science is properly philosophical, it is therefore also presuppositionless. On the contrary, he tells us that all inquiry begins by taking something for granted – by assuming “immediate” familiarity with its objects.¹¹ A “thoughtful [*denkenden*]”

⁸ WL 5:16/Hegel 1991b, p. 27. ⁹ WL 5:35/Hegel 1991b, p. 43.

¹⁰ Hegel makes this point explicitly in the first paragraph of his Introduction to the *Science of Logic*.

¹¹ Hegel is particularly explicit about this point in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*: “A beginning (being something *immediate*) does make a presupposition or, rather, it is itself just that” (EL §1; see also EL §10). These remarks may appear to conflict with his statement in the *Science of Logic* about how the beginning of the *Logic* has to be “absolute” and as such an “abstract beginning” that “may not presuppose anything” (WL 5:68/Hegel 1991b, p. 70). But in the passages from *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel describes how the *Logic* provisionally begins. It begins by “proposing” as its starting point pure immediacy, a purely “abstract beginning.” What it goes on to show, however, is that this beginning is an abstraction; there can be no “absolute” or wholly presuppositionless or immediate beginning. Although we started by thinking we were beginning with immediate knowledge, we learn that we were in fact ignorant of our starting point. As Hegel writes in the WL, our abstract or immediate beginning “is not truly known in the beginning” (WL 5:71/Hegel 1991b, p. 72). See also his remarks about the “provisional [*vorläufig*]” nature of the division of the logic (WL 5:56/Hegel 1991b, p. 59). Hegel's Introduction to his

inquiry or properly philosophical science, however, concerns itself with demonstrating the necessity of its beginning. It is in this sense that a properly philosophical science is a “fresh start,” for Hegel. A properly philosophical science is in this respect, as he puts it, an “altogether new conception of scientific procedure [*einen neuen Begriff wissenschaftlicher Behandlung*].”¹² Its beginning is self-consciously tentative and can only be established or justified in the course of the inquiry. For this reason, what logic is “cannot be stated beforehand.”¹³ The beginning of the *Science of Logic* is absolute not because it is presuppositionless but because – in contrast to other scientific inquiries – it takes seriously the task of justifying its beginning.

There are further sources of support for the thesis that, by Hegel’s own lights, the *Science of Logic* is not presuppositionless. If we look more carefully at features he associates with a proper science and with, in particular, a philosophical science of logic, for example, we discover that he is committed to the view that the *Logic* rests on a particular set of substantive philosophical assumptions. We discover this when we consider his remarks about the necessity of the *Logic* – including the necessity of its starting point.

This is a complicated story, but a quick summary will suffice for our purposes. Notice, first, that Hegel’s *Logic* is [Part I](#) of his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. The label “philosophical science” is important for Hegel because he is committed to the view that “necessity” may be predicated only of a science that deserves to be called “philosophical.” He contrasts his philosophical sciences with sciences that are merely “positive.”¹⁴ The typical encyclopedia, he says, is “completely positive [*durch und durch positiven*]” (EL §16). A science that is positive lacks a proper unifying principle; it collects sciences together in a manner that is “contingent and empirical [*zufälliger- und empirischerweise*]”

Lectures on the Philosophy of History (“VPG”) contains similar remarks about how his beginning must be provisional. His philosophy of history begins with abstract definitions that can initially be no more than “mere assertions” (VPG 20/Hegel 1988, p. 29).

¹² WL 5:16/Hegel 1991b, p. 27.

¹³ WL 5:35/Hegel 1991b, p. 43. Likewise in his Introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, the verification [*Beglaubigung*] of the definitions will occur [*empfangen*] “as the outcome of the science of history itself” (VPG 19/Hegel 1988, p. 30).

¹⁴ A variety of approaches can count as “positive,” for Hegel. Although he frequently describes positive modes of inquiry as “contingent” and “empirical,” it is not his view that only empiricist approaches can suffer from “positivity” (EL §16). He notes in this section of EL that the positivity of the sciences “is of different kinds [*ist von verschiedener Art*].” Positive approaches draw their purported evidence from a variety of sources: “partly *Räsonnement*, partly feeling, belief, the authority of others, in general the authority of inner or outer *Anschauung*” (EL §16). Even rational theology, in his view, can suffer from positivity (EL §36Z).

(EL §16).¹⁵ A positive philosophy of history that records facts simply chronologically, for example, relies on a principle of unity (namely, chronology), but its principle is defective. In contrast, a history that is properly philosophical discovers the right kind of conceptual connections among various stages of history. It tells a story about the progress of human freedom or "Spirit." In doing so, a properly philosophical history reveals the "inner governing soul" of events; that is, it reveals their *necessity*.¹⁶ Likewise, a merely positive approach to right is nothing more than a compendium or collection of decisions about what is right, derived from the examination of actually existing norms and institutions. Such an approach, Hegel insists, cannot establish the necessity of any particular norm or institution.¹⁷ So, although other encyclopedias typically rely on some principle in collecting together sciences under their heading, their treatment is positive, in Hegel's view, insofar as their governing principle is "arbitrary," "contingent," "empirical," or "external."¹⁸

Hegel sometimes gives us the impression that his charge against positive sciences or encyclopedias is simply that they are insufficiently self-critical. He gives us this impression, for example, when he complains that positive sciences rest on "a network of presuppositions, assurances, rationalizations – that is, on contingent assumptions [*ein Gewebe von Voraussetzungen, Versicherungen und Räsonnements, – d.i. von zufälligen Behauptungen*]" (EL §10).¹⁹ But the charge of positivity, for Hegel, is not just methodological. That is, his criticism is not simply that a science qualifies as positive if it is insufficiently critical of its own presuppositions. Rather – and this is the crucial point – a science is positive if it lacks a principle that *properly* unifies its diverse content. If it

¹⁵ See Michael Petry's discussion of different kinds of "arbitrary" encyclopedias in his Introduction to *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature* (1970, pp. 11ff.).

¹⁶ VPG 10/Hegel 1988, p. 19. See also VPG 59/Hegel 1988, p. 77 and EL §13.

¹⁷ In his *Philosophy of Right* ("PR"), Hegel tells us that his science of right is not "positive" because his aim is not just to establish that his science agrees with "prevailing ideas." This would never establish the necessity of his science (PR §2Z). See also §3, where he further distinguishes his approach from that of the positivist.

¹⁸ Encyclopedias that just cobble together individual sciences fail to recognize that there is unity in the diversity – or better, fail to recognize the *right kind* of unity in the diversity. They fail to notice that the "particular principles" that lie at the basis of the one system are merely "branches of one and the same whole" (EL §13). The approach that divides the "idea of nature" into "contingencies [*Zufälligkeiten*]," for example, "lands in determinations of existence, in kinds and differences, that are determined by external accident . . . not by reason" (EL §16).

¹⁹ At EL §16, he complains that positive sciences rest on "*bloße Willkür*," that is, on principles that are wholly arbitrary. See also the 1827 Preface to that work, where he criticizes philosophers who do not call their "steadfast presuppositions [*festen Voraussetzungen*]" into question (EL 6/17).

lacks such a principle, it cannot establish the necessary interconnection of its parts. What results is a mere aggregate, not a proper “system.”²⁰

Thus, it is not just that positive forms of inquiry are insufficiently self-critical, in Hegel’s view. Their positivity is a function of the fact that they rest on the wrong kind of ground because they embrace the wrong set of presuppositions. More precisely, a science is positive, for Hegel, if it adheres to the set of assumptions he associates with the standpoint he calls “understanding [*Verstand*].” When Hegel complains about the positivity of rational theology, for example, his point is not merely that rational theology does not sufficiently examine its presuppositions. His point is rather that rational theology defines God in a way that “shuts out negation” and is thus “abstract” (EL §36Z). The fact that positive rational theology clings to fixed or abstract thought determinations is a clear indication that it adheres to the logic of *Verstand*.²¹

In short, Hegel judges a form of inquiry to be positive and as such not genuinely scientific if it fails to demonstrate its principles with necessity because it is committed to the assumptions of *Verstand*. The larger lesson we should draw, here, is that the necessity of the *Logic* is linked to Hegel’s rejection of the substantial philosophical assumptions of *Verstand*. To put the point differently: The necessity of the *Logic* derives from – and therefore cannot be understood apart from – its adherence to what Hegel takes to be the only viable alternative to *Verstand*, namely the philosophical assumptions he associates with the standpoint of “reason [*Vernunft*].”

From these considerations, we can conclude that, in a certain respect, the necessity of *Science of Logic* is not purely formal, after all, if by “formal” we mean that its necessity can be understood independently of substantive metaphysical and epistemological assumptions about, for example, the nature of human thought and the conditions of human knowledge, about the relation between mind and world. Hegel’s reading of the necessity of the various progressions in the *Logic* – his characterization, even, of the starting point of the *Logic* and of what he takes as proper “proof” of the transitions – is filtered through his larger philosophical commitments. Hegel’s *Logic* (as well as the other branches of his system) is genuinely scientific because it replaces the standpoint of *Verstand* with

²⁰ The only way to properly defend any content [*Inhalt*], Hegel writes, is to defend it as a “moment of the whole.” Without this, the content is “subjective” and “contingent [*zufällig*].” It is merely an “ungrounded presupposition or subjective certainty.” “Philosophizing without a system cannot be anything scientific” (EL §14).

²¹ Hegel contrasts understanding [*Verstand*] and reason [*Vernunft*], for example, in his 1812 Preface to the SL. The understanding determines and “holds the determinations fixed”; reason, however, is “negative and *dialectical*” (WL 5:16/Hegel 1991b, p. 28).

the set of substantial philosophical assumptions he classifies under the heading *Vernunft*.

There is another and perhaps more economical way to establish this conclusion about the reliance of the *Logic* on the assumptions of *Vernunft* – and it merits at least mentioning here. What I have in mind is Hegel's account of the relation of the *Science of Logic* to the *Phenomenology*. In his 1812 Preface to the *Logic*, he explicitly tells us that it is in his earlier work, the 1807 *Phenomenology*, that he established the standpoint of *Vernunft* over that of *Verstand*. In his Introduction to the *Logic*, he writes, “the concept [*Begriff*] of the pure science and its deduction is *presupposed* [*vorausgesetzt*] in the present treatment, insofar as the *Phenomenology* is nothing other than the deduction of the concept” (my emphasis).²² Hegel makes no secret of the fact that his *Science of Logic* depends on what he refers to here as the “deduction of the concept.” As he says, the deduction is given not in the *Logic* itself but in the *Phenomenology*.²³

II

My aim in the previous discussion has been to raise doubts about a certain interpretation of what Hegel has in mind when he tells us that a science of logic should begin without presuppositions. What I have suggested up to this point is that the necessity claims Hegel makes with reference to his own *Logic* have to be understood as relative to a set of substantial meta-physical and epistemological assumptions, assumptions he associates with the standpoint of *Vernunft* and claims to have established in the *Phenomenology*. I have not established that there is, for Hegel, no respect in which the *Science of Logic* is presuppositionless.²⁴ But the considerations I have just reviewed make trouble, I believe, for a certain version of that claim – the version that assumes that the thought forms of the *Logic* emerge *ex nihilo*.

But where does contingency enter the picture? How does the conclusion about the dependence of the *Logic* on the philosophical results of the *Phenomenology* add up to evidence that the necessity Hegel attributes to the *Logic* is somehow also contingent? One thing we can say so far is that

²² WL 5:43/Hegel 1991b, pp. 48f.

²³ For further passages in which Hegel discusses the priority of the *Phenomenology* to the *Logic*, see, for example, WL 5:17/Hegel 1991b, pp. 28, 67ff.

²⁴ Dieter Henrich makes the intriguing suggestion, for instance, that Hegel's *Logic* is presuppositionless in that Hegel does not want to follow in the footsteps of Fichte and Kant in presupposing the simple representation “I think” (1981, pp. 161f., 182). Of course, even if Henrich is right, this does not establish that the *Logic* is wholly free of presuppositions.

the necessity claims of the *Logic* are contingent in the following respect: They are contingent in the sense of *conditioned*. Assuming that the interpretation I have provided is correct, the necessity claims of the *Logic* rest on the philosophical assumptions of *Vernunft*. They are not presuppositionless, then, if by presuppositionless we mean self-grounding.

Even if we grant, however, that the necessity claims of the *Logic* are contingent in this respect, we do not yet have an argument establishing that the claims are contingent in that they could (in some sense) be false. Indeed, we might seem warranted in taking Hegel to endorse the view that the *Science of Logic* lacks this further kind of contingency. That is, it might seem reasonable to suppose that Hegel considers the standpoint of *Vernunft* to provide the absolute or unconditioned ground of the *Logic*, and to thereby guarantee that the necessity claims of the *Logic* cannot in this respect be false.

Passages in the *Logic* appear to support this interpretation – passages, for example, in which Hegel characterizes the *Logic* as a “formal” science. As we saw earlier, he describes the *Logic* as belonging to the “spiritual [Geistigen]” or “supernatural [Übernatürliche]” realm, not to that of the “physical [Physikalische].”²⁵ Its object is thought itself rather than the behavior and properties of objects in space and time. The *Logic* is concerned with concrete objects only “as thoughts [in ihren Gedanken],” that is, “in their complete abstraction [in ihrer vollständigen Abstraktion].”²⁶ Its discoveries depend on acts of thought rather than on sensation. Moreover, Hegel insists that his *Science of Logic* is not an applied logic. The task of the *Logic* is not to determine the empirically contingent conditions that govern the actual use of concepts and laws. Finally, the developmental story Hegel tells in the *Logic* is more conceptual than historical in nature – at least, it is not historical in the sense of chronological. Hegel does not tie the validity or even mere appearance of the concepts and laws of the *Logic* to particular historical periods. He instead awards the forms of thought a certain timelessness; that is, he considers them capable of reappearing at various points in human history.

Although Hegel characterizes the *Logic* as formal in these ways, it is important that we appreciate that the representation I have just provided leaves a great deal out. The *Science of Logic* takes as its object thought itself rather than the properties and behaviors of empirical objects, but this tells us nothing about how Hegel understands the nature of human thought, or about where he believes thought gets its content (i.e., its concepts and laws). And although the *Logic* relies on reflection rather than observation or scientific experiment for its evidence about thought’s content, this

²⁵ WL 5:20/Hegel 1991b, p. 32. ²⁶ WL 5:23/Hegel 1991b, p. 34.

feature of the work reveals nothing about Hegel's views either of the conditions of human reflection or of the nature of its evidence.

We can fill in some of the missing detail of Hegel's account of the nature of reflection and the origin of its concepts and laws if we consider the way in which he characterizes his philosophical methodology. His remarks reveal much about his understanding of the conditions on which his own philosophizing (and hence his philosophical approach to logic) rests. In what follows, I will suggest that Hegel's methodological comments give us reason to suppose that he takes the necessity claims of the *Science of Logic* to be contingent in the second, more radical sense I mentioned a moment ago. I will propose, in other words, that the *Science of Logic*, for Hegel, is contingent not just in that its necessity claims depend on the substantive epistemological and metaphysical assumptions of *Vernunft*. The *Logic* is contingent, in addition, because Hegel has no way to establish that the assumptions of *Vernunft* are valid once and for all. He neither can establish this, nor does he claim to have a means of establishing it. For methodological reasons, as we will see, Hegel does not set out to argue that the assumptions of *Vernunft*, and therefore also the necessity claims of the *Logic* itself, lack contingency in this further respect.

III

What evidence is there in favor of my proposal? A moment ago, I suggested that a certain characterization of the formal character of the *Logic* is incomplete. I turn, now, to fill in some details of what is missing. To anticipate, what is in general missing is an appreciation of Hegel's understanding of the relation of his *Logic* to the history of thought.

Again, I am looking for evidence to back up my thesis that Hegel accepts that the necessity claims of his *Logic* are contingent such that those claims could in some respect be false. The defense I am going to provide relies on Hegel's own description of his sources of evidence and philosophical methodology. As a way of setting up this line of defense, I first contrast the view I am attributing to Hegel with that of philosophers who *deny* that their systems are contingent in this respect, philosophers who instead claim to have given their systems foundations that are valid once and for all. How do these philosophers understand the relation of thought – and of philosophy – to history?

In a certain respect, it is fair to say that both Descartes and Kant, for example, possessed a historical awareness – even an impressive historical awareness. Each was sensitive to the contributions and failures of his predecessors. Each was sensitive, even, to the ways in which his predecessors significantly influenced his own thinking. At the same time,

however, each philosopher was committed to the idea of a wholly fresh start in the following sense: Each held that past failures could be swept aside and replaced with an absolutely new beginning. I say this because neither Descartes nor Kant relativized to some particular historical moment his claim to have discovered the universal and necessary conditions of knowledge. Neither proposed, in other words, that his special insight into the conditions of knowledge was in this regard merely conditionally or contingently necessary. For both Descartes and Kant, philosophy could be given a new and secure foundation. Both philosophers were committed to this view in so far as both endorsed the assumption that human thinkers are capable of identifying the universal and necessary conditions of knowledge once and for all.

Although it is by no means immediately apparent, Hegel's view of the relation of thought to its history is significantly different from this in a way that is captured by the Mure quotation with which we began. As Mure notes, Hegel's effort to establish the necessity of his science is "partly moulded by" his effort to "conquer" contingency and finitude. We get a clue to the accuracy of Mure's insight when we consider the kind of argument Hegel deploys in establishing the superiority of his system. Whether in the *Philosophy of Right*, in the *Phenomenology*, or in the *Science of Logic*, his argument invariably involves an elaborate developmental story. In each of these discussions, the developmental story sketches a progression from less to supposedly more adequate systems – culminating, of course, in Hegel's own system. In the case of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* and on the *Philosophy of History*, the development is more narrowly historical in that it is explicitly tied to a narration of actual events. The point of these developmental stories is not just to remind us of the deficiencies of prior systems. Nor does Hegel offer us elaborate history lessons simply because he was a philosopher who happened to have a keen interest in history. The developmental narrative that invariably accompanies his efforts to establish the necessity of his system serves a further purpose. It is a crucial piece of his effort to demonstrate the necessity of his system.

To spell this suggestion out a bit further: Hegel goes to great trouble to highlight the way in which his system emerges, not *ex nihilo* from his creative exertions, but rather in response to previous systems. He wishes to demonstrate how his system has come to be as an effort to improve on defects he discovers (or, more precisely, takes human thought to have discovered) in predecessor systems. As a response to prior systems, his system is indebted to and therefore also conditioned by them. It is indebted to its predecessors for some of its vocabulary, its methodological and analytical tools, as well as its description of problems to be solved.

This at least in part explains Hegel's frequent characterization of his system as a "result."²⁷ His standpoint of *Vernunft* is an innovative solution to philosophical problems, but (on his own understanding) it does not appear out of nowhere.

If we now ask from what does Hegel derive his developmental stories – that is, from where does he get his data – the question appears at first glance to have no bearing on the project of the *Science of Logic* for reasons we already reviewed. As we saw, the *Logic* deals with "pure abstractions"; its object is nothing other than "pure thoughts," as Hegel says (EL §24Z2). Hegel has no interest, in the *Logic*, in locating the temporal origin of the various logical forms; nor does he seek to tie the validity of any logical form to a particular historical period. It at least appears, then, that Hegel draws his evidence from nothing other than an examination of the contents of his own mind. He reflects on his mind's content and derives the concepts and laws of the *Logic* by generalizing from his results. It would seem that Hegel discovers the forms of the *Logic* by undertaking a kind of Cartesian mediation that seeks refuge in a realm of pure thought and wholly abstracts from the actual practice of thought. Or so this interpretation goes.

I have been urging, however, that this portrayal of the formal and abstract nature of the *Logic* is off the mark. There is the fact, first of all, that the *Logic* contains abundant references to key moments and figures in the history of thought, beginning with discussions of Parmenides and Heraclitus in the opening paragraphs of the *Sein* chapter. Of course, it could be the case that Hegel includes these historical references simply to provide historical illustrations of the logical forms he takes himself to have discovered by introspection. That is, it could be that he includes the historical references merely to demonstrate that the thought forms he has discovered by abstracting entirely from history have revealed themselves in history. But this reading conflicts with Hegel's explicit remarks about the nature of his evidence. The *Science of Logic* is [Part I](#) of his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. The principal task of the *Encyclopaedia* as a whole is to delineate the "beginnings and foundational principles of the special sciences [*Anfänge und die Grundbegriffe der besonderen Wissenschaften*]" (EL §16). As a science of sciences, the *Encyclopaedia* aims at comprehensiveness; to achieve this aim, it must

²⁷ The point is not just about his system but about all systems: "The philosophy that is the latest in time is the result [*Resultat*] of all the preceding philosophies and must therefore contain the principles of all of them" (EL §13). Hegel makes similar remarks in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: "The present form of Spirit contains all the earlier stages within itself . . . The phases which Spirit seems to have left behind it, it also possesses in the depth of its present" (VPG 82/Hegel 1988, p. 105).

draw on other modes of inquiry. It relies for its data on the history of all fields of inquiry, on the empirical sciences as well as art, religion, and philosophy itself. Hegel's science of sciences, in his words, "does not leave the empirical content of the other sciences aside, but recognizes and uses it, and in the same way recognizes and employs what is universal in these sciences, [i.e.,] the laws, the classifications, etc., for its own content" (EL §9).

Far from being derived from introspection or absolutely pure reason, then, the forms of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* – including the forms of the *Logic* – are products of Hegel's study of the history of ideas. The forms of the *Logic* are abstract relatives of the rationality he discovers in events of human history and outlines in his *Philosophy of History*.²⁸ Ultimately, and in both works, his conclusions are the "outcome of the study of history."²⁹ Indeed, when Hegel characterizes the abstract nature of philosophy, he never suggests that philosophy is capable of wholly abstracting from its history. He instead links the abstract character of philosophy (including a philosophy of history) to the fact that it leaves inessential details out; it does not concern itself with mere "externalities of history [*geschichtlichen Äußerlichkeit*]" (EL §14). Just as the empirical sciences seek to discover universals and laws in the multifarious content with which they are concerned, so philosophy "deals with . . . the universal in the sea of empirical particularities, and with the necessary, the laws, in the sea of apparent disorder in the infinite mass of the contingent" (EL §7).³⁰

²⁸ In a passage in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* in which Hegel compares philosophy – or specifically philosophical reflection – with inquiries into its history, he remarks that he discovers in both the "same development of thought [*dieselbe Entwicklung des Denkens*]" (EL §14).

²⁹ VPG 13/Hegel 1988, p. 22. In the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel compares the practice of philosophy to that of other – less lofty – endeavors. The message seems to be that we are mistaken if we suppose that the philosopher can carry out her business without engaging in the kind of mundane practices required by other human efforts. He endorses the thesis that we learn about the forms of thought not by retreating to some (illusionary) realm of pure thought, but by studying the history of thought, that is, by studying the *actual production* of thought-forms. Our knowledge of those forms must come from our study of the history of thought in all its variety. We are mistaken, Hegel suggests, if we think that learning the practice of philosophy is all that different from learning other skills: "One accepts that in order to make or fabricate [*verfertigen*] a shoe, one must have learned and practiced this and that . . . Only when it comes to philosophizing is it supposed to be the case that the same kind of study, learning and effort are not required. In recent times, this comfortable opinion gets its confirmation from the doctrine of immediate knowledge" (EL §5).

³⁰ There is admittedly a sense in which the *Science of Logic* is *not* historical in that, as I mentioned earlier, Hegel does not restrict the appearance or validity of any of its logical forms to a particular historical moment. The philosophy of Parmenides gives us a good

Of course, none of this by itself establishes that Hegel must also be committed to the thesis that this exposition of the thought forms in the *Logic* is contingent in that it could be false. His view might instead be that a study of the history of ideas can warrant conclusions about timelessly valid forms. If we wish to support the thesis that there is a sense in which Hegel accepts that his claims in the *Logic* could be false, we need to consider not just his account of the sources of his evidence but also his view of the kind of knowledge he believes that evidence can support. We need to consider further features he associates with his “philosophical” approach to history.

IV

In his Introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel explicitly discusses his method as a philosopher interested in deriving philosophical lessons from history. Although his subject matter in these lectures is the philosophy of history rather than logic, his remarks nonetheless illuminate (in a highly condensed way) his views on the nature and conditions of human thinking *in general*.³¹

Interestingly, Hegel characterizes his own “philosophical” approach to history as *a priori*. By “*a priori*,” he means not that his reflections owe no debt to history but rather that he is engaged in a conceptually mediated or “thoughtful” consideration of history. The “*a priori*” of his approach is thus consistent with what he tells us in these pages is his conviction that no historian is capable of grounding his results on immediate or wholly passive sensation. The historian, in Hegel's words, has to conceptually “work through [*verarbeiten*]” her data versus merely observe.³²

example of a certain understanding of the concept of “being”; but in the history of thought, Parmenides was not in Hegel's view alone in embracing this particular definition of “being.” Likewise, there is a certain understanding of the opposition between “appearance” and “essence” that has reappeared and will likely continue to appear in various guises and at various periods of intellectual history. Hegel is not committed to the assumption that belief in this opposition is confined to a particular historical moment. Although it is true that he defends a thesis about the progressive character of human thought, it is equally his view that the past is always with us. He accepts that habits of thought are hard to break, and that old fallacies plague and will continue to plague even the most disciplined thinkers. He derives from the history of thought the lesson that the battle between the Parmenideans and the Heracliteans is likely to continue, at least in some form. In this respect, he is indeed committed to the view that the thought-forms of the *Logic* have a certain timelessness.

³¹ This is not an assumption I have the space to defend in this essay. I believe it can be shown, however, that Hegel's spare methodological remarks in the Introduction to his *Philosophy of History* reflect his more general project of improving on weaknesses he discovers in both empiricist and rationalist traditions.

³² VPG 8/Hegel 1988, p. 18.

Just as interesting, however, is Hegel's insistence in these remarks on distinguishing his a priori approach to history from other a priori approaches. He explicitly endorses the following two theses: First, he is committed to the thesis that it is the historian's *duty* to submit her interpretations to empirical verification. It is "the first condition" of the historian, in his words, to "apprehend the historical faithfully."³³ "We must take history as it is, and proceed historically, empirically [*wir haben historisch, empirisch zu verfahren*]." Hegel criticizes those whose approach to history is a priori in that they ignore this duty. (For example, he criticizes those who assert, as a matter of historical fact and without sufficiently considering evidence to the contrary, that there was once a kind of paradise, in which an "original, primeval people" received direct instruction from God.)³⁴ With this commitment to the necessity of empirical verification comes a commitment to the duty to revise hypotheses should new data require it. It may turn out that patterns that the historian or philosopher of history today identifies as necessary will tomorrow be deemed insignificant.

Second, Hegel endorses the thesis that no historian or thinker can contrive hypotheses that are absolutely a priori (hypotheses that are products of pure creativity or imagination). This commitment follows from his conviction – mentioned in this discussion as well as in other texts – that no thinker can stand outside her time.³⁵ So, not only is it a transgression of the historian's duty not to submit her theories to empirical verification, it is also sheer fantasy, in Hegel's view, for any historian to think that she is capable of a purely a priori approach to history. The historian – and likewise the philosopher of history – considers history from a point of view; she brings to history intellectual tools that locate her in time. Her interpretations of history – including her interpretations of the most abstract forms in the history of thought – are in this respect a "result."

Hegel thus alerts us in this discussion to the fact that his a priori approach is what we might call a qualified or moderate a priori approach – an approach that takes seriously both the historian's duty to submit her hypotheses to empirical verification as well as the historically grounded nature of all inquiry. In the context of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, these are points about the limits of any philosophical consideration of history. But as I mentioned, Hegel's remarks in this discussion reveal his more general understanding of the nature and conditions of human thought, whether its object be some historical event or some (far more abstract) logical form. In endorsing the assumption that any a priori

³³ VPG 14/Hegel 1988, p. 23. ³⁴ VPG 13/Hegel 1988, p. 22.

³⁵ See, for example, VPG 55/72; PR 21/26.

approach has to be in these respects a moderate a priori approach, Hegel commits himself to the implication that even his own histories of human thought and action are contingent in the sense that they, too, may one day have to be rewritten.

To sum up the main points of this essay: I have set out to challenge a certain way of understanding Hegel's claims about the necessity of the *Science of Logic* and its presuppositionless beginning. I have suggested that these Hegelian claims must be understood to be compatible with the contingency of the *Logic* in at least the following two respects: First, the *Science of Logic* is contingent in that its starting point as well as its developmental unfolding depend on substantial philosophical commitments, commitments Hegel believes he has justified elsewhere. Second, the *Science of Logic* is contingent in that Hegel does not take himself to have established – or be able to establish – that its thought-forms and the system to which they belong are valid once and for all. I defended this second sense of contingency with the help of Hegel's portrayal of his methodological commitments, in particular, his reflections on the historical basis of human reflection, whatever its object may be. I have focused my attention, in this essay, on these two respects in which it may be accurate to characterize the claims of the *Logic* as contingent. I have left open the possibility that the *Logic* may be contingent in further respects as well.

3 Philosophy and the “Stream” of Cultural History

Ludwig Siep

I

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, not many philosophers are confident of a continuous progress in cultural flourishing, norms, and institutions, as philosophers were in the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries. Instead of developing a priori concepts of the goal of humankind or deriving an inherent telos of history, even social critics today are more interested in understanding past and present crises and perhaps intervening to support a “rational” solution. For some, this means avoiding catastrophe, be it material or moral, such as a regress into “barbaric” institutions or ways of life; for others, some steps toward a better future – regarding well-being and normative orders of society – seem possible or at least an obligation to work for (“make the world a better place”).

It is not only the idea of progress which was profoundly shaken in the twentieth century. The very concept of philosophy as somehow outside the “stream of history” became doubtful – if there is such a thing as “one” history at all beyond the sequence of political, economic, military, scientific, and religious events, patterns, or trends in different parts of the earth and outer space.¹ Independent of the answer to this last question, philosophy as a human activity is certainly a part of particular and global cultural history. A “view from nowhere,” however, is only possible if there are timeless truths, for both theoretical and practical reason. But precisely these are doubtful for the “postmetaphysician.”

Being located “within the stream,”² is there any hope of understanding its direction and of judging it as in some respect better (more rational, more moral, more “human”), or at least of estimating the chances to

¹ Regarding the “invention” of one singular history in the late eighteenth century, see Koselleck 1979, pp. 38–67.

² As a metaphor used in this text, “stream” must be taken in a wide sense as a movement of something fluid or gasiform that can carry content. It has no definite direction like a river going always downhill. The German word *Strom* can mean either a big river or an electric current.

defend what is worth defending? Is it possible to be at the same time participant in and judge of crises or experiences leading in a determinate direction, either positive or negative? Certainly the judging in this case will be part of the crisis itself and promote or impede its development in one or another direction. Are there experiences with the role of philosophers within historical crises?

One could claim that the first work in the history of philosophy dealing with these questions is Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. “History of experiences of consciousness” is one formula he considered for the title of this book.³ Within this series of experiences, almost all the influential positions in the history of philosophy are presented as being a “provocative” part of a culture, initiating crises by either articulating or questioning the leading principles of a culture or common self-understanding. At the same time, there is the author and the reader of the whole book, the “we” who present, follow, and understand the process. The author often anticipates stages to come, and he and his addressed reader remember experiences undergone. In the end, both possess the standpoint of “science” or “speculative thinking,” which is at the same time “spirit’s” true self-consciousness. The relation of the two (or three, if we distinguish between the author and the reader) perspectives is a controversial question among interpreters.

This controversy, in which Robert Pippin’s interpretations play an important role,⁴ centers on the question of how much the “outside” philosopher is really distinguished from the shapes of consciousness and its reversals during the history of experience. What is the absolute knowledge that the author apparently possesses not only at the end but from the very beginning? Does Hegel, speaking of the movements of the concepts, the “*selbstische Wesenheiten*” and so forth, that “organize” the sequence, apply the method and the concepts of the Science of Logic, as he claims in all later parts of his system (e.g., in the *Philosophy of Right*)? Before discussing Hegel’s outside philosophical perspective, I first deal with the inner perspective (“within the stream”). Is it at all legitimate to compare the role of philosophy, such as Stoicism, skepticism, the Enlightenment, Kantianism, in the shapes of consciousness to the modern activities of philosophers as epistemologists, social critics, or moral philosophers?

Pippin’s work hints at the dramatic metaphors that Hegel uses with regard to the self-criticism of spirit in his “path of desperation”: namely,

³ For the story of this title, which Hegel replaced during the printing of the *Phenomenology*, see the editors’ note in Hegel 1980, pp. 469–70.

⁴ In what follows, I refer primarily to Pippin 2008b.

its “inflicting wounds” on itself, and healing them without leaving “scars.” His key for this process is Hegel’s philosophy of action, as discussed in sections B and C of the chapter on reason (ch. V) of the *Phenomenology*. Hegel criticizes both the causal and the intentional models of action, to put it in modern terms. There is no such thing as an inner plan executed in bodily movements. Rather, every action takes place in a social-normative space. It uses reasons or purposes taken from a pattern of understandable behavior, reacts to expectations, and posits itself in relation to norms and rules – both as a follower and as claiming normative authority. The real meaning of the action is revealed to the actor and his environment only through this process. In this sense, it negates the indeterminacy both of the intentions and to some degree also of the pattern of collective life forms. Self-negation and self-production are the most important characteristics of spirit. They must, of course, be demonstrated to be at work not only in collective patterns of behavior such as the “court culture” with its ritual and language changing from medieval times to absolutism and its decline (discussed by Hegel in the section on culture in the spirit chapter). They must equally be valid for processes in the explanation of nature and its principal concepts – force, law, polarity, life, and so on.

Can the conventional view of the role of philosophy in a cultural environment be subsumed under these structures? Of course this role can be played on very different levels of abstraction. A philosopher as a public critic can, for instance, criticize the death penalty or the discrimination against homosexuals. He or she can justify the criticism from a position in general ethics and metaethics. At least here we are already on a level that Hegel discusses in the *Phenomenology*: He criticizes, for instance, a Kantian justification of property or unconditional prohibition against lying (ch. V.C.b and c). Of course, he traces these applications back to the very concept of law-giving and law-testing reason. But to go back to the most basic principle behind one’s explanation, justification, or critique is a move undertaken by every philosopher, even in the most “applied” fields of philosophy.

Philosophy’s making explicit the background assumptions of every epistemological or normative claim is indeed a sort of negating of indeterminateness. And in most forms of philosophical enlightenment or skepticism, this is bound to prove that the given, natural, divine, or eternal norms and laws are produced by human activities, understood in the way that Pippin elaborates.⁵ Even seemingly solitary prophets articulate and struggle with traditions in their groups or in (holy) texts that they

⁵ Most explicitly in Pippin 2008a.

reinterpret. One need not deny the "creativity of action,"⁶ of interpretation, or the production of art to concede that spirit produces itself by negating its own indeterminacy. But if the self-negation of spirit holds, as Hegel claims, also for the philosophy of nature, strong presuppositions have to be accepted: "Nature" itself, or that which spirit seems neither to produce nor to completely control, has to be understood as indeterminate and unconscious spirit. I am doubtful that many pragmatist Hegel scholars would accept this view.

There remains one objection to our comparison between the "normal" view of philosophy as part of a particular culture and epoch and the way in which particular philosophies function in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. It may be said that for Hegel, culture is rather a part of philosophy than the other way around. He claims that consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) essentially examines (*prüft*) itself about the appropriateness of its activities to its basic criteria (for truth, objectivity, moral value, etc.). To put it in more traditional terms: All human culture is – as Aristotle claimed for the human being – striving for knowledge about itself and the world interpreted by it. This permanent self-examination and self-correction in Hegel's view leads to periodic reversals of old, insufficient, and incoherent criteria and their replacement by new ones. Philosophy as the most fundamental reflection on presuppositions helps with these revolutions and articulates their very epistemological and ontological implications.

These are not just scientific revolutions replacing a scientific "paradigm" in the sense of Thomas Kuhn,⁷ but "philosophically assisted" reversals of implicit common assumptions of science and activity, both individual and social. For Hegel, as later for Heidegger, this marks the real progress of human knowledge. Such a view may sound arrogant in times when the sciences are completely emancipated from philosophy and can claim much wider public attention and social impact. However, in a fundamental sense Hegel's claim, that man as spiritual being always checks the premises of his knowing and acting, still fits the modern self-understanding. Avoiding blindness and dependency on something or someone outside of one's view may still be claimed to be the comprehensive aim of even the most modern cultural activities. If the modern ideal is autonomy, this should in any case be one of its constitutive elements.

That the whole process has in some sense a philosophical character and direction, however, does not signify that the philosophical theories in a particular culture could step outside the process and look from "nowhere" or from an anticipated end. The way particular philosophies in their historical situation participate in common experiences is certainly

⁶ As emphasized by Joas 1996. ⁷ See Kuhn 1962.

a subject discussed in many chapters of the *Phenomenology*. To be sure, experiences in the strong sense of this work are only complete reversals of the self- and world understanding. Not every philosophical criticism from the inside of a culture will lead to such consequences. But that philosophical conceptions and activities are among the most important internal crisis triggers is beyond doubt.

II

Our modern concept of culture is certainly not completely adequate to Hegel's concept of spirit. There is little doubt, however, that Hegel, beginning with the chapter on spirit (ch. VI) of the *Phenomenology*, deals with the self-understanding dominating the activities and thoughts of people in religion, art, politics, science, and everyday customs of a particular epoch. This is the case with "ethical life" and "ethical action" in preclassical Greece; the Roman Empire dominated by its law, religion, and politics; and the ancien régime in France and the Revolution. One could claim that even in the preceding chapters, although they deal with constitutive elements of spirit rather than with the temporal sequence of comprehensive cultures, Hegel deals with the role of particular philosophies within constellations of theoretical knowledge, patterns of norms and social relations (such as the struggle for recognition).⁸ Positions elaborated within Greek philosophy as well as early modern and eighteenth-century philosophies (Locke and Leibniz, Kant and Fichte) certainly play the role of preparing the "destabilization" and reversal of forms of consciousness already in the first four chapters of the *Phenomenology*. But here we can confine ourselves to the chapter on spirit.

The two most prominent cultural crises in European history in which – not only for Hegel – philosophy played a crucial role are the Socratic crisis of the classic Greek polis and the Enlightenment crisis of the ancien régime. Modern historians may have a much more complex, multifactorial, and contingency-dependent view of these processes. But it is probably not an exaggeration to claim that the *Phenomenology*'s discussion contains more complexity and sophistication than any other presentation within

⁸ In my view, the cross-references regarding the "fight for recognition" in many of Hegel's texts throughout his life – from the Jena fragments through the *Philosophy of Right* to the late lectures on the philosophy of subjective spirit (Hegel 2008 and 2011) – leave no doubt regarding the social aspect of this fight. It can, however, be treated by Hegel in many perspectives: as a classical figure of the natural right tradition since Hobbes, as a paradigmatic process of state building in the "age of the heroes" (similar to Vico's half-mythological picture in the introduction of *The New Science*), and as a necessary step in the development of self-consciousness after Fichte.

Hegel’s time. Hegel represents long-standing tensions and developments in different parts of the preclassical and classical Greek culture as the preparation of the Socratic crisis of the polis. Thus Socrates – at least as portrayed by Plato – represents in his person and thinking the conflicts that dominate the development of the Greek tragedy and other forms of art, religion, and politics, fields not yet differentiated in any modern sense. The very concept of moral, self-conscious, and responsible action is generated by these developments and the significance of human individuality is enforced by the view of God as the perfection of the human individual (for Hegel prominently in Greek sculpture). But the culmination is also the beginning of destruction: Socrates’s method of asking for justification of the seemingly self-evident concepts of the Athenian public such as *eusebeia*, *epistēmē*, and *dikaíosunē* and his appeal to his own conscience or *daimonion* trigger the dissolution of the “beautiful” harmony between individual citizens, religious customs, and the glory of the polis.⁹

The function of philosophy in this and other historical instances is apparently to conceptualize the main principles implicit in the arising conflicts of a culture. By this conceptualization, they gain the status of leading criteria in an epistemological and normative sense. But the consequence of this distinction is the deepening of an imbalance in the normative patterns. Philosophers themselves are often aware of the dangers of this one-sidedness. Perhaps not Socrates himself, but Plato certainly tried to propose a synthesis between the individual’s claim for the justification of norms and his devotion to a just political order giving room to everyone’s special faculties. Plato’s *Republic* is in Hegel’s view not even a radically new model. It rather presents an interpretation of the Athenian polis in light of which it shows its potential to fulfill the criteria of such an order. For Hegel, however, it failed because it did not appropriately accommodate the new principle – for instance, by fixing the class membership of an individual with his birth.

The “destructive” forces of philosophy become even more manifest if we take a look at the role of “les philosophes” in the decline of the ancien régime and the preparation for the French Revolution.¹⁰ However, here again the Enlightenment philosophers resume, conceptualize, and radicalize long-standing tendencies. They can be seen in the erosion of the moral basis of the Christian-aristocratic society of Europe’s most

⁹ There are other manifestations of paradigmatic individuals breaking up this harmony in the classical Greek polis. Hegel apparently refers to Alcibiades when he states: “Because the existence of ethical life depends on strength and luck it is already decided that its downfall has come” (PhG §475, trans. Miller with changes).

¹⁰ This view on the cultural-historical role played by the philosophers of the French Enlightenment is certainly one-sided. For a comprehensive discussion see Pippin 1997a.

developed nation-state, namely, France since the seventeenth century. Hegel, as is well known, analyzes the reversal of the justification and function of economy (“wealth”), aristocracy, and state power as well as the battle between the traditional church faith and modern science. The result must be judged from two sides. In the self-perspective of the French culture of the late eighteenth century, all credible justification for loyalty to the traditional society and church as well as the scientific justification for theology and morals was eroded in the debate between materialism, deism, and skepticism.¹¹ This, at least, is the retrospective philosophical interpretation of a cultural breakdown. But in view of his own philosophical insight, Hegel goes much further. From this perspective the principles of all sides of the battle – even of the supernaturalists and the materialists – become indistinguishable. To show that conceptions thought to be mutually exclusive if analyzed in their precise meaning are not even distinguishable from one another is certainly part of Hegel’s own method. It is an example of dialectics in the negative or skeptical sense, giving rise, however, to new principles that contain the former contradictory concepts as “moments” of a more complex and differentiated meaning.

As regards the role of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy, it is both comparable to and different from the “first enlightenment” in Greek philosophy. Both prove that the individual citizen and his – for a few philosophers already “her” – judgment must be accepted as the basis of justification for norms and truth claims. But the Platonic tradition and its Christian transformation gave rise to conceptions of natural and divine law that are at stake in the battle over the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The outcome is the erosion of this system justifying state and church authority as well. The rationality of individuals, however, demands common principles of actions, laws, and common goals guiding the behavior of societies. “Autonomy” in the legal-political sense means to be at the same time a member of the law-giving authority (“sovereign”) and of the body of subjects. This “new synthesis” was discovered by Rousseau – again not as a pure rational construction, but at least partly as an interpretation of the Geneva constitution as a modern revival of the Roman republic.¹²

¹¹ Regarding the philosophers Hegel explicitly or implicitly refers to in this chapter, see the editors’ notes in Hegel 1980, pp. 511–15.

¹² The close connection between Rousseau’s *Social Contract* and his understanding of the constitution of Geneva is apparent from a comparison of this text with the Dedication of the second *Discourse* and the *Letters Written from the Mountain*. Heinrich Meier drew attention to these connections. See Rousseau 1984, pp. 9–41.

However, Rousseau’s concept of the *volonté générale*, although praised by Hegel as a true philosophical discovery, fails as basis of a state order – as did Plato’s *Republic*. Its insufficiency was, in Hegel’s view, even a principal reason for the Jacobin terror. The universality and equality characterizing the common will is conceived simply as the negation of all particularities, in the sense not only of the interests of estates, professions, and families but also of individual views of the common good. Thus its principle is suspicion against any aberration from the definition of acts of the common will that some assembly, committee, or even supreme representative of the nation (such as Robespierre) has decided on. This constitutional principle lacks any organic content of different perspectives, competencies, and loyalties that must exist even in modern societies composed of autonomous individuals. Though they are no longer born into a special estate or profession but can qualify for each of them, a rational state needs different perspectives on the common good stemming from special competencies and experiences. Hegel, as is well known, is no friend of the “atomism” of modern liberalism – as he himself called it in his lectures on the philosophy of history.¹³

Thus he considered Napoleon’s constitutions containing chambers of different professions¹⁴ better suited to reconcile the autonomous individual with the common will than the preceding revolutionary constitutions. And even the “Charte” of Louis XVIII in 1814 Hegel considered the true result of the experiences of the French Revolution.¹⁵ In a more fundamental philosophical perspective, his own *Philosophy of Right* can be regarded as this result. And two centuries after Hegel, we may claim that it failed as did the *Republic* and the *Social Contract*. Judged by today’s standards of human rights, division of power, democratic procedures, international law, and secularism, it might be judged as insufficient a synthesis of individual autonomy and common will as its famous predecessors.¹⁶ Of course, Hegel’s idea of the rational state and society lacks the experience of nationalism, imperialism, and totalitarianism of the past two centuries. But taking this to be a defense presupposes that we regard the history of experience as an open process. Progress in this view is just the ability to learn from experience that corrects the unavoidable one-sidedness or lack of differentiation in the principles underlying normative frameworks and institutional arrangements.

¹³ Cf. Hegel VPG. 12:534/Hegel 1861, p. 471.

¹⁴ Cf. Rosenzweig 2010, p. 238, and Siep 2014b, p. 190. ¹⁵ Cf. Hegel 1983, §134 R.

¹⁶ Cf. Siep 2015.

III

Many Hegel scholars attribute to Hegel himself such an “open” view of cultural history, at least in the *Phenomenology*. Therefore its concluding chapter on absolute knowledge summarizes only the structure of the preceding process and the competencies of the philosopher presenting it. Robert Pippin made a strong case for this reading. In his view, the process of phenomenological experiences generates a twofold philosophical understanding of the social practice of “reason giving and reason demanding” regarding normative claims for the justification of behavior: First, philosophers have to be able to “understand the basis of such claims *for the participants* (why and in what sense they find the claims justifying)”; second, the philosopher understands “the determinate partiality of such normative reasons and therefore the *philosophical* reason for their breakdown” (2008b, p. 225). “Spirit” is basically the self-producing communal activity of applying and justifying reasons for actions as well as scientific claims. The philosopher participates in it and understands why a pattern of reasons breaks down.¹⁷ However, if one abstracted an “independent category theory” or a “doctrine of self-moving conceptual or actual noetic structure” from this series of experiences, one would “have missed the most important lesson” of the *Phenomenology* (p. 227).

It is certainly important for our subject whether and how far Hegel’s concept of absolute or speculative knowledge goes beyond that of a sort of reflective participatory perspective. To clarify this question, let us first consider whether a social-action theory of spirit is incompatible with the conception of a “self-moving conceptual structure.” Second, we have to ask how the double role of the *Phenomenology* within Hegel’s system can be upheld without some sort of “category theory.” At least in 1807, the work was meant to be an introduction to “speculative” knowledge and at the same time a part of the system based on it. This presupposes a theory of negative (or critical) and positive (or speculative) dialectics.¹⁸

(1) It is true that individual action always takes place within a pattern of social practices – even trivial ones such as shopping or traveling – functioning on the background of accepted reasons. This process can be

¹⁷ In this direction, see also Pinkard 1996, pp. 265–7. For Pinkard, in consequence of Hegel’s insight no standpoint outside the communal reason giving and reason demanding exists: “Modern Hegelian philosophy, understanding itself as engaged in such a historical practice, cannot therefore claim to go *outside* the rest of culture. . . but [must remain] firmly inside it” (p. 266).

¹⁸ Since the middle of his Jena period, in the manuscript “Logic and Metaphysics” of 1804/5, Hegel distinguishes between a negative dialectic dissolving the oppositions of classical metaphysics and positive or speculative dialectic. The latter constitutes a metaphysics – in a new sense – of absolute subjectivity or spirit. See Düsing 1976, esp. pp. 150–208.

understood as the negation of indeterminate intentions by the interplay between individual action and social interpretation, questioning, blame, or acceptance. At the same time, the social self-understanding itself is made explicit, interpreted and perhaps changed by the action. Seen in a larger perspective, this is what happens to the justifying reasons of a cultural epoch as well – such as honor and, autonomy. For Hegel, these reasons and norms can be traced back to much more general ones – how could one otherwise see the indifference between the Enlightenment concept of “pure matter” or “utility” and its opposing concept of faith in God as absolute being without further determinations? To exhibit this collapsing of seemingly opposite concepts into indistinguishable ones demands, of course, that they be enacted in spiritual fights of arguments, even in battles for power – for instance, between the church and the intellectual salons and pamphlets. But this aspect of social – and spiritual – activity does not exclude that one understands them as self-determining, self-differentiating, and gradually enriching concepts eventually forming a network with a syllogistic structure. If the “determinate partiality” of normative reasons does not result from their “abstraction” (in Hegel’s sense of isolation) from such a holistic network of norms or concepts, the philosopher’s role is reduced to that of reconstructing every breakdown that took place in cultural history as yet.

To be sure, this conceptual network in Hegel’s meaning is not to be separated (“independent”) as the only “true” reality from spirit as individual and social activities. This would contradict the overcoming of the form-content or concept-reality dualism, the very aim of the *Phenomenology*. In a lecture on speculative philosophy in the summer of 1806, in which he seems to have presented parts of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel remarks (according to the text quoted by K. Rosenkranz) that in absolute knowledge “the concepts are neither empty abstractions and moving thoughts beyond being – they are filled with real consciousness; nor are they alien essences and an objective being-in-itself [*An sich*] or a being which is not concept.”¹⁹ Thus the concepts in their “logical” network and their contents within self-consciousness are not to be separated. The concepts are, so to speak, abbreviations of the principal forms of self-conscious social activities – the latter are always “remembered” in their meaning.

(2) This philosophical view has a double function in the *Phenomenology*. First, the unfolding network organizes the sequence of “shapes”; and the

¹⁹ Hegel 1998, p. 473, my translation (compare the commentary of the editor, K. R. Meist, at pp. 742–5).

necessity of this sequence is required for the “ladder” to or the proof of speculative thinking – namely, the understanding of this conceptual and social process against all dualisms of consciousness.²⁰ Second, to this conceptual differentiation and enrichment corresponds what Hegel in his earlier Jena manuscripts but also in his later philosophy of spirit presents as the “organism” of spirit or – as he puts it with respect to the state – the “temple of reason.”²¹ It is true that the *Phenomenology* does not go into details of the “modern” shape of objective spirit. But the rational relation between family, economy, and state – as well as individual rights, private interests, and public duties – becomes clear in the crises of the ethical world, the moral spirit, the state of law, and the development of religion. The sequence of institutions contained in Hegel’s philosophy of objective spirit before and after the *Phenomenology* shines through in several of its chapters.²²

It is true that in contrast to the philosophy of spirit of 1805/6, there is in the *Phenomenology* no legal or political institution that corresponds to the highest stage of “mutual recognition.”²³ The ethical form of successful mutual recognition in the *Phenomenology* is the moral spirit’s reconciliation between nonconformist conscience and the moral community, which is also present in the spirit of the enlightened Protestant religious community.²⁴ For the antidualist proof of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel regards them as more important steps than political institutions. It remains an important question, one not to be discussed here, whether the later philosophy of objective spirit contains institutions adequate to full recognition according to the *Phenomenology*. But if I am right that basic institutions of objective spirit are contained in this book as well, their sequence must follow some “scientific” or conceptual necessity. And if this necessity is proved, as Hegel claims in his later texts on objective spirit, by the “method” or the “spirit” of the *Science of Logic*,²⁵ this must

²⁰ Cf. PhG §805: “To each abstract moment of science corresponds a shape of spirit, appearance as such.” See also Siep 2014b, pp. 64–71, 238.

²¹ Cf. Hegel 1983, p. 240.

²² In addition to family and state, Hegel mentions the structure of civil society (the “systems” of personal rights and property, the division of labor, and professional associations) already in the chapter on the ethical world (PhG §455) and in the discussions of wealth in the chapter on culture (§§494–505). On the development of Hegel’s theory of civil society in Jena, see Horstmann 2014, pp. 193–216.

²³ In the manuscript of 1805/6, Hegel interprets the “constitution” (in a specific sense) of a state and its correspondence to a church, both representing absolute spirit, as the completion of mutual recognition – including mutual self-renunciation, the characteristic of reconciliation in the moral spirit of the *Phenomenology* (Hegel 1976, pp. 252, 255). See also Siep 2014a, pp. 18, 127–31.

²⁴ Regarding the conformity between moral reconciliation and the spirit of the Christian community, see PhG §§707, 763–6, 793ff.; Siep 2014b, pp. 229–31.

²⁵ Cf. PR, Preface, p. 10.

equally be true for their anticipation in the *Phenomenology* – even if the Jena Logic is not yet the Nuremberg or Berlin one.²⁶

If the *Phenomenology* can be read as a rudimentary philosophy of objective spirit – as well as of subjective and absolute spirit and even spirit’s externality in nature – it is doubtful to regard it only as the self-transparency of the structure of social activity and its experiences with norms. Additional doubts arise from passages in the chapter on “absolute knowledge” that correspond to other textual evidence in earlier and later writings. They support a view of history as a process in which “the concept,” the network of particular concepts, judgments, and syllogisms unfolding in social activity and philosophical thought as well, needs the historical process of articulation in particular cultures only up to a certain point. In other words, spirit, the self-reflection of the concept, manifests itself in time (and history) “just as long as it has not *grasped* its pure notion, that is, has not annulled time [*die Zeit tilgt*]” (PhG §801, my translation).²⁷

This certainly does not mean that history as a temporal process comes to an end, but that for the comprehension of the concept (or rather its self-comprehension in the human being), the historical process loses its significance. The claim that the essential structure (“pure concept”) of spirit is definitely discovered in speculative philosophy is made in the *Phenomenology* as well as in the *Science of Logic*. This is not a formal structure – as Hegel claims against the formalism of transcendental philosophy and the “Schellingians” – but contains a systematic sequence of determinate concepts. If they are elaborated for the norms and institutions of societies, as in the systematic philosophy of objective spirit, the claim will be that at least the basic institutions of a rational state are definitively visible.²⁸ The remaining problems have to be solved on this basis in the ongoing “real” social and political history, as Hegel concedes in his late *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.²⁹

²⁶ Regarding the development of Hegel’s *Logic* at the time he wrote the *Phenomenology*, see Fulda 1998 and Pöggeler 1998.

²⁷ Robert Brandom (2005, p. 159) seems likewise to attribute to Hegel a claim on time independence regarding the concepts of the *Science of Logic*. On the other hand, absolute knowledge in the *Phenomenology* in his view is “making explicit” the structure of an open historical process: “a relation of different time slices of spirit, in which the present acknowledges the normative authority of the past and exercises authority over it in turn, with the negotiation of their conflicts administered by the future” (Brandom 2002, p. 234).

²⁸ One of the reasons is that the modern state (including family and civil society) corresponds to the basic truths of the final revelation of religious truth in Protestant Christianity (cf. EG §552).

²⁹ See the famous remarks on the “knots” and “collisions” that remain to be solved in future history (VPG 12: 535/Hegel 1861, p. 472).

To put the normative results of the *Phenomenology* regarding social norms in more abstract or contemporary terms, the relation between individuals and societies, close as well as large anonymous ones, has to be characterized by mutual support along the lines of Hegel's family, civil society, and state. An analogous relation must hold between moral conscience,³⁰ legal relations, and the ethical life of a particular community. On a more general level, it is the "duty to remember"³¹ and learn from the "experiences of consciousness" that remains necessary for spirit's self-reflection in Hegel's view. It is precisely the oblivion of the – if only one-sided – validity of principles governing former stages that is the germ of new crises on the new stage.

What, then, is the standpoint of the philosopher who presents the progressive steps of cultural crises? Certainly not a prophetic one. But even if he disposes only of a "retrospective and reconstructive sort of teleology,"³² a level of conceptual norms is reached that allows judging the progressive direction of the past and the possible setback of future developments. Thus, in my view, absolute knowledge is a bit more than just the logic of (past) experiences. The Hegelian philosopher is both inside and outside the cultural-historical processes. Not only looking back, but also in view of proposed solutions of future crises, he disposes of criteria for the distinction between progressive and reactionary developments. The problem becomes much more complicated if we do not share Hegel's premises of a complete understanding of "the concept" and the resulting – if only retrospective – teleological conception of history.³³

IV

If contemporary philosophy lacks the conceptual means for justifying a teleological view of history and the criteria for safe judgments regarding progressive developments, the following options seem to remain open:

(1) Philosophy, like other forms of social criticism, articulates tensions or even contradictions within the normative pattern (or self-image) of a society: for instance, between ideals (and legal requirements) of equality

³⁰ In my view, the relation between morality, legal relations, and ethical life is not fundamentally different in the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Right* – despite the change in the meaning of morality between the two books, which Dudley (2008) rightly observes. See also Siep 2011b.

³¹ For a modern discussion of this duty, see Bienenstock 2014.

³² Pippin 2008b, p. 225.

³³ As to my skepticism concerning the teleological aspects of Hegel's philosophy in general, see Siep 2013.

and remaining discriminations, or between the principle of autonomy and the social conditions to form an independent judgment or to claim one’s rights in legal procedures. Particular societies or international conventions may then find new institutional solutions or may work on collective mental attitudes overcoming these contradictions. Their results can be interpreted by philosophy with enriched concepts of equality and autonomy or even additional concepts.

Not all of these processes may be called “experiences” in the strong sense of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* – namely, as reversals of (collective) consciousness and the attainment of new shapes or stages of culture. New shapes in this strong sense are always in danger of “forgetting” earlier experiences and not conserving what was worth integrating in the new pattern of norms, institutions, and mentalities. Even without disposing of a complete recollection of the pivotal experiences,³⁴ it seems at least progressive to minimize these forms of oblivion. Many forms of modernization had catastrophic consequences just because of such neglects, as for instance forms of secularization with a strict (even brutal) oppression of religious life.

However, this form of developing norms and institutions certainly has conservative traits. It presupposes that at least some core of modern norms of equality, autonomy or solidarity, human rights, and so on is worth conserving.

(2) The other, less conservative form would be to agree that in post-metaphysical times nothing remains but an open process of communication on norms and institutions. None of them is protected against reversal and creative invention of new ones. Among these new ones, however, may also be (very) old ones such as strict obedience to religious or political authorities or the reintroduction of “natural” differences as the basis of normative rules. They might even be revived by technical enhancements such as human beings endowed with much higher than normal intelligence or superior bodily abilities – natural leaders whom everyone seems well advised to follow.

Some theorists of communication or the evolution of social systems argued for such a complete openness.³⁵ Most of them, however, considered the modern way of communication in autonomous differentiated (*ausdifferenziert*) systems – with technically advanced means of communication carrying their own messages – as precluding radical revisions of modernity. This seems to be refuted by the way modern media such as the Internet carry the most radical criticism of modern life-forms and appeals

³⁴ As in absolute knowledge: see PhG §808. ³⁵ For instance, Luhmann 1997.

for holy wars against them. An unlimited change of norms is equally supported by political theorists with strong views of democracy and “people’s sovereignty” (*Volkssouveränität*). They claim that no such change could be taboo if supported by strong majorities. Thus either “back to the past” or experiments with radical new forms of life, including “transhumanism,” may be justified. The role of philosophers in the latter case would be to think of new possibilities for human beings – in the line of the utopian tradition or of Nietzsche’s superhuman (*Übermensch*).

However, in this case philosophy might lose any claim not just to rational justification but also to social criticism. The philosopher would have no means or criteria to judge about a progressive direction or at least the avoidance of normative “catastrophes,” which he used to call “barbarism” or “fundamentalism.” Thus the question recurs whether such an aspiration can be upheld without an external or “outside” standpoint in the strong sense.

(3) There might be weaker ways of claiming external criteria, not a priori and not from the perspective of a teleological view of history. One way might be to assume an internal logic of the “moral point of view,” although this view itself might be a cultural-historical invention – like, say, painting, religion, or contracts. If the moral point of view is that of a hypothetical “impartial benevolent observer,” impartiality itself might generate an internal demand of overcoming unjustifiable exclusions. Thus one can try to reconstruct the history of morality as the widening of the inclusion or – from a reverse perspective – the loss of plausibility for criteria of exclusion from the moral community (half-humans such as slaves, nonbelievers). This would at least justify a direction irreversible by arguments within the moral “language game” – as, for instance, arguments of racists or religious fundamentalists.

Another version of these weaker claims might be to transform Hegel’s logic of “positing” and “presupposing” (*Setzen und Voraussetzen*). Some creations or inventions of norms, which were proposed, fought for, and agreed upon in accidental events and conventions, might be claimed as fitting for the human constitution (*condition humaine*) – and therefore in some sense valid independent of their discovery. The overcoming of torture and slavery and of the oppression of physically and mentally weaker human beings, freedom of conscience, basic mutual assistance, and so forth might count as real discoveries in this sense. We call the criterion of such behavior against fellow human beings respect for their “dignity.” What this means can only be articulated by a growing list of justified claims and corresponding duties, the widely accepted human rights. And part of their rational justification is

the recollection of historical experiences including shared emotional discoveries.³⁶

The philosophical justification of these norms might still be supported by a theory of the social constitution of self-consciousness,³⁷ as is shown by the “renaissance” of the theory of mutual recognition. For Fichte, who first developed it as a part of a theory of self-consciousness, this was the only possible rational relation between rational beings. But apparently he already built into his concepts of rationality and self-consciousness ideals of autonomy, equality, and mutual respect. It can hardly be shown that every human being to whom we would not deny self-consciousness lives under conditions of mutual recognition in Fichte’s sense. And on the other hand, the legal and institutional norms securing these conditions for Fichte – and for Hegel, too – are far from those we would today regard as conditions of autonomy and equality.³⁸ Thus mutual recognition demands different concretizations and – without Hegelian presuppositions of the structure of spirit – it is not clear that we can identify a complete set of conditions in law, economy, and other parts of modern culture.³⁹

The justification of concrete forms of mutual recognition including human rights and their consequences for, say, modern labor conditions or access to water and health services, cannot be transcendental, conceptual, or restricted to other typically philosophical methods and instruments. It demands the recollection of former experiences of suffering or flourishing and empirical studies of health conditions and the like. Neither the interpretation of the former nor that of the latter will be uncontroversial.

A third way of judging progressive or regressive developments within a collective normative self-image and its legal and institutional expression refers to the very process of the solution of crises.⁴⁰ To count as a collective “experience,” it must have a phase of articulating the shortcomings or

³⁶ Cf. Hunt 2007, esp. chs. 1 and 2. In Hegel’s fragments on the *German Constitution*, the common feeling that the institutions lost their life and the involvement of the citizens played a crucial role as well. But despite his anti-dualism and his defense of passion (see EG §434), no instances in his later writings recognize collective emotional “insights” (compare, e.g., his downplaying of the emotions of the people in PR §345).

³⁷ Pippin rightly stresses that self-consciousness is not a fact or faculty but an “achievement” (see Pippin 2011, p. 28). If self-consciousness, however, is the source of claims on others, the criteria for such an achievement should not be too demanding.

³⁸ For a critique of these institutional consequences, see Siep 2010, pp. 77–91.

³⁹ The triadic structure of recognition which Axel Honneth preserves in his writings (1992 and 2011) is difficult to justify without those presuppositions. Perhaps they should be replaced by an open list. Even then, the way of their fulfillment in modern institutions remains controversial. See Siep 2014a, pp. 37–9.

⁴⁰ Cf. Rahel Jaeggi’s suggestion of a synthesis between pragmatist (Dewey) and Hegelian elements of solving crises within collective forms of life in Jaeggi 2014.

failures in the fulfillment of norms – for instance, equal civil rights and police practices. This phase may include protest movements, media and scientific criticism, the providing of expertise, and so forth. Already in this (negative) phase, impartiality is a criterion difficult to realize in modern societies with dominating media groups and political parties and the necessity to polarize to get public attention.

The second phase is that of the discussion of alternative solutions, for instance, regarding energy production or the relation between local and nationwide self-government. The lack of imagination and the narrowing (or premature exclusion) of alternatives are familiar mistakes precluding an impartial and sustainable solution of social problems.

The third step, the decision on new or changed norms, be they legal norms or publicly supported ways of behavior, has to have some traits of a Hegelian “sublation”: It must reach a new balance, avoiding the inconsistencies within the former pattern or between its intention and the results in its actual performance. But it must at the same time be interpretable as a realization of the promises of the former pattern – at least of those elements that were not illusory but stood the “test of time” as well. There will be no complete independence between our view of approved experiences in the past and present judgments of good solutions – we will have to accept a sort of (Gadamerian) circular dialogue between present and past experiences. The requirement of impartiality is most difficult to meet on this step: Especially in democratic societies, it seems to demand as broad a consensus as possible. But to get the acceptance – or only the renouncement of fundamental resistance – of groups cherishing traditions time tested in their view may just foreclose new solutions and real social learning.

These procedural criteria for rational or progressive social developments are, of course, pretty vague when it comes to hard decisions. And the ongoing and unbridgeable controversies, for instance, regarding bioethics – from research with human embryonic stem cells to “green” gene technology – prove that it is hard to claim that a solution is really progressive. The philosopher as bioethicist is so deeply “within the stream” that each of his suggestions risks being not only too partial but also wrong in the long run.

V

Renouncing a priori principles or a teleological view of history has, as the discussion might have suggested, high costs for the philosopher as an internal critic within a particular culture. Belonging to a process of cultural experiences without being able to definitely judge their direction

or tell whether they are valuable experiences at all is an uncomfortable position. If it seems too risky to simply jump ahead in any direction that completely future-oriented experts suggest – and success on the market or political majorities might support – philosophers are bound to look for some irreversible norms. They can be material, such as human rights, or procedural, such as the moral point of view, or more specifically the democratic processes necessary for participatory rights and communal learning.

Perhaps the place of timeless norms can be filled by a set of irreversible moral and legal achievements justified by painful collective experiences and their "best normative explanations." Together with the development of criteria for ways out of new conflicts and suffering (such as mutual recognition, extended social inclusion, conditions of "flourishing"), this may be the only remaining "view from outside" for a practical philosophy without metaphysical teleology.

To give up the pretense to an external standpoint overseeing the general direction of cultural history, however, is not a complete abandonment of the "project of modernity" or the claims of enlightenment. Even without a concept of extra-historical reason, it is possible to justify irreversible but not unchangeable norms and procedures as requirements for participants in a free pluralistic society. Philosophers defending these claims against regressive tendencies, however, are already part of particular or global communications and conflicts.

To come back to the metaphor of the stream: Without firm river banks, milestones, and compasses, this might mean using only slow-moving objects for orientation.⁴¹ Compared with the "bacchanalian revel" that Hegel wished philosophers to incite, this sounds very modest indeed. But without his safe anticipation that this swirling would lead to self-organized systems, philosophy might indeed be forced to such modesty. Neither dialectical systems nor completely open communication has spared us the failures of the "new human race" of the early twentieth century or the old holy wars of the early twenty-first.

⁴¹ There may be an analogy here to Quine's relation between center and periphery in Quine 1951, esp. §6.

Part II

Hegel and Before

4 Aristotelian Master and Stoic Slave: From Epistemic Assimilation to Cognitive Transformation

Paul Redding

Introduction: Philosophy, Freedom, and the Greeks

It is no secret that Hegel's history of philosophy is decidedly Eurocentric: "Philosophy proper commences in the West. It is in the West that this freedom of self-consciousness first comes forth" (VGP 18:121/1:99).¹ This is so because there is a direct link between "free, philosophical thought" and *practical* freedom; philosophy only appears "where and in as far as free institutions are formed . . . Therefore philosophy first begins in the Greek world" (VGP 18:117/1: 95–96). This identification of the start of philosophy with the appearance of freedom in the social world encounters an immediate problem given that, as Hegel clearly acknowledges, Greek society was "free" only in the limited sense of a freedom available to some. Indeed, not only was the Greek polis a slave-holding society, this condition of slavery was, as presented by Hegel, not contingently related to the birth of philosophy. The free philosophy of the some could be secured only by the unfreedom of others. But here the relevant contrast was with the world of Oriental despotism: The freedom of some was of course an increase in freedom when compared to the limitation of freedom to one – the despot. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of Hegel's own time, the Greek polis was clearly as unfree as it was free, and we might expect this to be reflected internally within Greek philosophy itself. Philosophy is, we know, "its time raised to thought," and we might expect the paradigmatic philosophy of the polis to reflect a dynamic such that the condition of unfreedom of some is somehow internal to it. In this essay, I pursue this question from the perspective of what is perhaps the most well-known text of Hegel, the short "master-slave dialectic" from the *Phenomenology of Spirit's* ch. 4.

¹ Initial volume and page numbers are to Hegel's *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Corresponding volume and page numbers to the three-volume Haldane and Simpson translation follow.

For a large part of the twentieth century, the master-slave dialectic had for many come to play the role of cipher for understanding diverse aspects of Hegel's overall philosophy; probably more than the work of any other single interpreter, the reading of Hegel given by Alexandre Kojève in the 1930s (Kojève 1969) has provided a popular picture meant to represent Hegel's account of the human condition and of the general movement of history toward universal freedom driven by a supposedly essential human desire, the desire for recognition. But the spirit of such a quasi-anthropological reading, with its Marxist and Heideggerian overtones, sits uneasily with Hegel's description of "every philosophy" as "essentially idealism" or at least as having "idealism for its principle," and here I want to examine some well-known features of the parable when it is transposed into another, more idealist, key – one operative within a historical account of philosophy itself.

In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ch. 4, the immediate successor to the master and slave dialectic is the figure of the Stoic; as a philosophical outlook, Stoicism, as Hegel presents it, had attempted to unify many of the general features of the earlier outlooks characteristic of both master and dependent slave. The aim of the Stoic was, like that of the former master, to be free, but the freedom aimed at had been conceived of as indifferent to whether the Stoic's actual existence was that of a master or a slave, freedom being conceived as indifferent to whether one is "on the throne or in chains." But this indifference to the question of actual social status expresses a general unfree existence. Thus, as "a universal form of the World-Spirit, Stoicism could only appear on the scene of a time of universal fear and bondage" (PhG §199). While originating in Greece, Stoicism had given expression to the social life of Rome – a condition in which freedom once more had effectively retracted to the freedom of *the one*. Here, however, I want to focus on one particular parallel between the Stoic and the slave: The Stoic, I suggest, works, but this work is not carried out on objects such as those worked on by the slave. The Stoic's is more a type of "spiritual" work – a work that we might think of as directed at the objects of thought rather than the actual objects themselves. It is the need for, and nature of, this work that I want to explore in relation to another conception of philosophical existence, one that regards philosophical knowledge as acquired in a relation to the world that is more like that of the master. This is a conception that thinks of philosophy as a type of passive apprehending rather than working – a conception, I suggest, supplied by Aristotle. But while the objects of the Stoic's spiritual labor will not be those of the slave, they will nevertheless also be seen to have a *material* dimension.

The Aristotelian conception of the philosopher might be understood as providing a philosophical analog of the master's attitude in the sense that

while the master had linked independence to liberation from work and material existence, and so with a concern for the provision of desire-satisfying things, Aristotle had linked cognitive independence to the achievement of knowledge, understood as the result of a type of cognitive apprehension of the essences of the substances populating the world. And just as the original master was, paradoxically, shown to be dependent on the slave's labor, might it not be the case that the Aristotelian, then, like the original master, in his drive to incorporate such essences might be found to be ultimately dependent on the cognitive labor of another overtly dependent agent? Hegel does, I suggest, treat the Stoic as a fundamentally working or transforming subject rather than epistemically appropriating one, although this self-comprehension was not available to the Stoics themselves. The Stoic had renounced the actual world, and the Stoic's action was not oriented to the transformation of actual things, like the slave. Rather, it was primarily directed to the transformation of *representations*, an activity that Hegel describes as "reflection" and "analysis." This is an activity still directed to worldly items, but they are predominantly *linguistic* ones.

Aristotle: Perceiving as Consuming Forms

In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel rejects the commonplace contrasting of Plato and Aristotle as representatives of antithetical extremes of idealism and realism, or rationalism and empiricism (VGP 19:133/2:118–19). Aristotle had developed Plato's *speculative* philosophy: He had been a follower who took dialectic beyond the limitations found there and who, like the later Neo-Platonists, made the divine *noesis noeseos*, thought thinking itself, central to his metaphysics. A crucial part of Aristotle's surpassing of Plato for Hegel was the central role played by his concept of "change." While Plato had focused on the "affirmative principle" concerning the idea's abstract self-identity, Aristotle had made explicit this hidden moment of negativity and change (VGP 19:155/2:140).

Nevertheless, the commonplace construal of the essentially speculative Aristotle as a type of empiricist, interested primarily in "natural history" was, for Hegel, not entirely wrong: Although Aristotle "finds himself at the highest standpoint . . . he has always the appearance of making ordinary conception [*Vorstellungen*] his starting point" (VGP 19:165/2:150). His divine conception of substance seems thus overlaid and ultimately compromised by a static conception of individual substantial forms presentable in sensuous experience and devoid of movement and self-negation. While Aristotle's thought was universal in scope (VGP

19:132/2:117), his presentation was for the most part by means of a succession of unconnected independently conceived areas “empirically selected and placed together in such a way that each part is independently recognized as a determinate conception, without being taken into the connecting movement of science” (VGP 19:133/2:118). Considered as an empiricist, he was certainly “a thinking one”; but while Aristotle “presses further into the speculative nature of the object,” he does so in such a way that the latter “remains in its concrete determination,” which he “seldom leads . . . back to abstract thought-determinations” (VGP 19:148/2:134).

It could be considered that one expression of this “empiricist” limitation of Aristotle’s speculative thought is Aristotle’s account of perception and *epagoge*, commonly translated as “induction,” especially as presented in *Posterior Analytics* (Aristotle 1993), Book Beta, ch. 19.² There, Aristotle states that all animals have perception, but in some percepts are retained in the soul, allowing those animals to have a new type of knowledge grounded in this retention. It is here that he introduces his celebrated image of a group of soldiers in a rout in the course of a battle. A common stand comes to be made, first by one soldier making a stand, then another, then the next, and so on, until they come to make a stand as a whole and achieve “a position of strength.” The retreating individual soldiers represent the flow of individual percepts in time, and when the stream of percepts comes to make its collective stand in this way, “there is a primitive universal in the soul,” writes Aristotle, “for although you perceive particulars, perception is of universals, – e.g. of man, not of Callias the man.”

One might here pause to wonder how while particulars are perceived, perception can, nevertheless, be of universals. In the section *Psychology* in the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel, in the context of a criticism of the modern empiricist conception of perceptual experience notes that “the abstraction that occurs in the representing activity by which *universal representations* are produced . . . is frequently expressed as a *superimposition* of many *similar* images upon one another” (EG §455). Here we might extend the superimposition picture he has in mind to Aristotle’s analogy of the collective making of a stand by the retreating soldiers. However, Hegel goes on,

² As has been pointed out (McKirahan 1983, p. 1), while the word “induction” “comes from the Latin rendering of Aristotle’s word *epagoge* . . . modern conceptions of induction bear a relation, frequently only a distant one, to Aristotle’s *epagoge* [and] it would be fundamentally wrong to assume that Aristotle’s notion is the same as any modern notion of induction.” See also Hamlyn 1976.

If this *superimposing* is not to be entirely a matter of *chance*, with no trace of a concept, a *force of attraction* between similar images must be assumed, or something of the sort, which at the same time would be the negative power of rubbing off their remaining unlikeness against each other. This force is in fact intelligence itself, the self-identical I which by its recollection immediately gives the images universality, and *subsumes* the individual intuition under the already internalized image. (EG §455)

That is, for Hegel the formation of a suitable abstract universal could not be accounted for by anything like the sensations or percepts coming to “make a stand.” Not only is conceptual *activity* involved, but also something like Kant’s “I think.” What is needed to supplement the empiricist account is some idea of the subject’s active involvement in the transformation of a specific concrete representation into a general abstract one. A similar criticism of the modern empiricist account of concept formation is suggested when Hegel discusses the process of “analysis” and, more generally, “the analytic method” in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* and *Science of Logic*.

The analytic method, Hegel tells us in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, “consists in dissolving [*aufzulösen*] the given concrete dimension, individuating its differences, and giving them the form of *abstract universality*; or in leaving the concrete dimension as the *ground* and, through abstraction from the particularities that seem inessential, extracting a concrete universal, the *genus* or the force and the law” (EL §227). More specifically, in discussing the analytic method, he notes that it first engages with an object that “has for it the shape of an isolated individual [*Gestalt der Vereinzelung*]” that it tries, in analysis, to trace “back to a universal.” This is the standpoint of Locke and those other empiricists who analyze “the given, concrete objects into their abstract elements and then consider the latter in their isolation” (EL §227Z). Here he repeats earlier comments on empiricism, where he noted that because perception is “always of something singular [*Einzelnes*] and transitory,” while knowledge “seeks the universal, that which abides,” empiricism must utilize analysis to go from perception to experience and from there to thought. The *error* of empiricism here consists in its non-cognizance of its own analytic activity: While it “transforms [*verwandelt*] the concrete into something abstract” “it believes that it leaves [its objects] as they are” (EL §38Z).

To the extent that Aristotle assumes a passive account of experience, like the modern empiricist, his account will have to be supplemented by one that stresses the active, transformative dimension of the process. But Aristotle’s consuming model of experience differs from that of the modern empiricist in as much as it has it that *forms* are consumed. “The concept” is

involved in the process from the start, and this is a feature of Aristotle's account that Hegel will exploit in giving an account of the *logic* of the process that sees contents of perception, that can be understood as about specific objects such as Callias, be transformed into intentional states directed at universals. We need to look at the elements of Aristotle's logic on which Hegel will build.

According to the logical taxonomy of judgments in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* (Aristotle 1963), a sentence with a proper name such as "Callias is sitting" expresses a singular judgment, in contrast with which there exist two forms of general judgments, *particular judgments* such as "Some men are sitting" and *universal judgments* such as "All men are sitting." General judgments in both their particular and universal forms are, it would seem, about the universals: Both "Some men are sitting" and "All men are sitting" say something about the genus "man," and they do so by saying something about all or some men (Whitaker 1996, p. 89). However, the subject of a particular judgment can be narrowed down to a single instance, as in "some man" or "this man." In this sense, we can have a judgment relating to some specific man, such as Callias, while being about the universal that Callias instantiates, as long as the noun phrase is taken indefinitely and as not referring to some particular man. These distinctions will be exploited by Hegel in his account of judgment in the *Science of Logic*, which will provide the framework for liberating Aristotle's truly speculative philosophy from the misleading "empiricist" presentation in which it is found.

Hegel and the Transformative Path of Aristotle's *Epagoge*

Hegel provides an explicit account of the difference between concrete *de re* and abstract *de dicto* judgment contents in his treatment of judgment in Book Three of *Science of Logic*. There he makes an initial distinction between two types of judgment, "judgments of *Dasein* [determinate existence]" and "judgments of reflection" (WL 6:311–26/557–68 and 6:326–35/568–75).³ While in the former predication is to be understood in terms of the *inherence* of the predicate *in* the subject (WL 6:311/557), in the latter it is to be understood as the *subsumption* of the subject *under* the predicate (WL 6:328/570). The judgment of *Dasein*, he tells us, has as its "first pure expression" the logical form "*the singular is universal*."

³ Here, first volume and page numbers to Hegel's *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Following page numbers refer to the English translation by di Giovanni, which is occasionally modified. I have given a fuller account of Hegel's treatment of judgment and syllogism along these lines in Redding 2014.

But Hegel notes that “every judgment is in principle also an abstract judgment” (WL 6:312/558), the implication seeming to be that in making a judgment of *Dasein* such as “the rose is red” one simultaneously commits oneself to a higher-order judgment about the *categories* exemplified by the elements in the judgment. Thus to assert that “the rose is red” is to implicitly assert the abstract proposition “the singular is universal,” which is meant to identify these two determinations of conceptuality – an idea rooted in the ultimate unity of the “moments” of conceptuality in “the Concept” itself.

This has profound implications for Hegel’s subsequent analyses of the logical form of the judgment. Thus, while according to the general form of the judgment, the universal predicate expresses something ideal and imperishable, such as redness, and the subject something concrete and perishable, such as a rose, the asserted identity of the determinations occupying subject and predicate places made in the judgment implies that the predicate must itself be, like the subject, perishable and the subject, like the predicate, imperishable. We might say that while, qua universal, *redness* is (as something ideal) imperishable, in the perceptual judgment itself it becomes a *determinate shade of red* – the particular color of *this rose* – and so becomes something perishable, capable of fading, for example. The universal has resolved itself, says Hegel, into something singular. This is a circumstance that is expressed by a proposition that is the converse of the “first pure expression” and expressed by the proposition “the universal is singular,” judgment just being “this *resolution* of the universal, the *development* of the negativity which, implicitly, it already is” (WL 6:313–14/559).

Hegel’s strange analysis needs considerable unpacking, but the idea of the subject of the judgment becoming universal and the predicate becoming singular is at basis, I think, a simple one. Treating the normally universal predicate as a singular term can be understood as resulting from simply reversing subject and predicate terms in the judgment in a manner suggested in the early days of analytic philosophy by Frank Ramsey. Ramsey, in an effort to undermine the metaphysical significance of the traditional subject-predicate relation, had pointed out that “Socrates is wise” and “Wisdom is a characteristic of Socrates” are equivalent: “If the centre of our interest is Socrates we say ‘Socrates is wise,’ if we are discussing wisdom we may say ‘wisdom is a characteristic of Socrates’; but whichever we say we mean the same thing” (Ramsey 1925, p. 404). In Ramsey’s example, reversing the subject-predicate order of the judgment was a way of effectively converting a judgment about a specific concrete thing (Socrates) into one about something general (wisdom), but Hegel generalizes this type of move. In Hegel’s example, the first

“resolved” form of the “positive” judgment of existence thus can be understood as having a form something like “*this red color* (the new subject) belongs to (predication as inherence) *this rose* (the new predicate).” But as other specific properties of the rose, its shape, its color, and so on can also be said to belong to it; *the rose* as that which the various properties inhere must now be considered to have the *generality* typical of a predicate. It has become a universal – in fact, a *concrete* universal.

With this idea of reversing subject and predicate terms, Hegel now has a device that can be reiterated to generate a series of increasingly complex judgment forms. Thus we can expect a further form of the judgment of existence to be generated out of the “resolution” of the new universal (the rose as that concrete universal in which the properties inhere) into a new singular item, restoring the original subject-predicate order. Conversely, the particular color of the rose once more becomes signified by a color term understood as a general term and that plays the role of predicate. This is brought out in the judgment’s negative form. When one says, for example, “the rose is *not* red,” negation here will, Hegel points out, only be taken as applying to the determinateness of the general predicate. The denial is not taken to imply that the rose is not colored: “From the side of this universal sphere, the judgment is still positive.” Rather, “it is . . . assumed that it has a color, though another color” (WL 6:322/565). If a rose *is* red, then it is *not* yellow, *not* pink, *not* blue, and so on; if it is *not* red, it is yellow or pink or blue, and so on. We can say that even if it is red, *had it* not been red, then it would have been yellow, or pink, or blue, and so on. The judgment is now a matter of saying something about the rose, not its property, and so the noun phrase “the rose” is once again to play the role of subject, and “red” having reverted to a general term that is true of all shades of red, not just the color of *this particular rose*, has once again become a universal.

The judgment about the particular rose is now set up to be transformed into one with a quite different logical form, that of a “reflective” judgment in which the predicate is said to *subsume* the subject, rather than *inhere within* it. The distinction between an “inhering” predicate and a “subsuming” one can now be understood in terms of a distinction that had emerged in the seventeenth century: that between the judgment understood *intensionally* on the one hand and *extensionally* on the other. Leibniz had thought of judgments in a fundamentally intensional way: to say that humans were animals, say, was to say that the concept <animal> was contained within, or inhered within, the concept <human>. But Leibniz also thought that such a judgment could be understood as saying something about the *extensions* of the terms: as saying that the class of humans was contained in the class of animals. Thus he thought that the judgment could be

transformed into a shape that reflected this extensional reading, and much as Russell was to do later, he translated universal categorical judgments as “hypotheticals.” “All humans are animals” could be expressed as “If something is a human, it is an animal.” This latter form will be effectively what Hegel tries to capture with the idea of a “reflective” judgment.

In the negative form of the judgment of existence, the subject term had become (concretely) universal – the rose as that in which various properties could inhere. I suggest that Hegel thinks of this term in the way that Aristotle had thought of as the subject term of a “particular judgment.” First, the term contains a universal term “rose” that is needed to determine the implicit universal “color” that is implicit in the predicate “red.” This ensures that the term “red” is taken as belonging to an array of alternative contraries appropriate to that genus.⁴ The second feature of the term concerns the semantic ambiguity of noun phrases such as “some rose” or “a rose.” The logic taught at Tübingen had it that such phrases were ambiguous (Aner 1909, pp. 19–20).⁵ While they could be meant in *de re* manner to refer to some particular or specific rose that the speaker has in mind, they could also be used in a logical sense to refer to some “indefinite” or nonspecific rose. This latter is the reading intended when “some rose” or “some roses” is used as an explicitly quantified noun phrase that stands in opposition to “all roses” or “no roses” in the subject place in the judgment. Read in the former way, the sentence expressed a *de re*, intensionally construed judgment of existence; read in the latter way, it expresses a *de dicto*, extensionally construed judgment of reflection. Once more, the reflective judgment is meant to be understood as being about the universal, “red,” as that under which some roses or all roses will be said to be “subsumed.”

In the analysis of the judgment of reflection, Hegel works through its three differently quantified forms of singular, particular, and universal judgments. The form of universality in the last, he notes, is the “external universality of reflection.” It is the “all of all the *singulars* in which the singular remains unchanged” (WL 6: 331/572). It is, writes Hegel, the type of universality found in polynomial equations. Clearly the references here are to Leibniz and his attempted *mathematization* of logic that renders judgments as equations, a topic that Hegel knew about from the logic taught at Tübingen and with which he deals in the discussion of the syllogism. But Hegel argues that the capacity to strip those things

⁴ It may be literally true to say that “the *number* two is not red,” but that does not imply that the number two is thereby “either pink, or yellow, or white,” and so on. Numbers are the kinds of things that can be odd or even, but not red or yellow.

⁵ The textbook used in Hegel’s logic classes has recently been republished as Ploucquet 2006.

that thought is purportedly about to the status of singulars (or what are commonly referred to as “bare particulars” deprived of all their determining qualities) gives an illusory sense of “allness.” Bare particulars are meant to be subsumed under a concept, but if they truly have no properties “the collected singularity cannot combine to form a unity” (WL 6:332/573). This means that “the empirical allness thus *remains a task*; it is an *ought* which, as such cannot be represented in the form of being” (WL 6:332/573). In any case of actual reasoning about a collection of things, there must be something intrinsic to those things that had allowed them to turn up in the collection in the first place: “‘All humans’ expresses, *first*, the *species* ‘human’; *second*, this species in its singularization” (WL 6:332–33/573). With this we again see the reversal of subject and predicate terms. The reflective form of the judgment was about the subsuming universal, and the things to which it applied were conceived as merely instantiating that universal. But they must have had other properties in common that allowed them to be collected together in the first place, properties that are definitive of the “secondary substance,” say “the human as such” that now becomes the overt subject of the judgment. In this way the reflective judgment transitions into the “judgment of necessity.”

Hegel, with his developmental taxonomy of judgments, now has a way of explaining Aristotle’s claim that while *particulars* are perceived, perception can be said to be nevertheless *of universals*. In, say, “Callias is sitting,” something is being said of Callias. Transformed into “Sitting is a property of Callias,” the term “Callias” has become a type of universal term, because other properties also can be said to belong to Callias. This is now made explicit by replacing the singular term “Callias” with an equivalent particular term such as “some human”: to know that Callias is sitting is to know he is *not standing*, and thereby it is known that Callias is an instance of the kind of thing for whom sitting and standing are possible alternative states. But while “this human” or “some human” had been introduced as an alternative way of referring specifically to Callias, this term can be alternatively understood as the subject of a “particularly quantified” general judgment of “reflection” that in turn can be understood as a judgment *about the kind*, “human as such.” The original perceptual judgment about *Callias* has become a judgment about a universal, the genus “human being.”

We can now see that Aristotle’s epistemically assimilative relation to the world needs to be matched by a kind of intellectual labor; this labor, I suggest, in Hegel’s picture is to be found in the kind of activity carried out by the Stoic. In particular, the Stoic’s labor will be the labor of “reflection,” the activity at the heart of “analysis.” In short, it is reflection

that transforms the concrete into the abstract, judgments of *Dasein* into judgments of reflection. But what is the nature of this activity that is said to “dissolve” the given concrete contents of perceptual judgments of *Dasein*? I suggest that there is an at least implicit answer lurking in Hegel here – while the actual slave worked on *things*, transforming them in ways that made them usable, the Stoic works on *material representations*, transforming them in ways that make them cognitively useable. But while this enabled the Stoic to overcome a problem within classical speculative philosophy, it was done at the expense of introducing philosophy into its *dogmatic* phase, dogmatism being “a way of thinking, whether in ordinary knowing or in the study of philosophy” governed by “the opinion that the True consists in a proposition which is a fixed result, or which is immediately known”; such “truths” are in fact “different from the nature of philosophical truths” (PhG §40). The Stoics, I suggest, were central to an event that Hegel has in mind in the *Science of Logic* when he described the post-speculative period as one in which “the *reflecting* understanding seized hold of philosophy” (WL 5:38/25).

The Ambiguous Position of the Stoics in the History of Philosophy

Hegel is explicit in his evaluation of the Stoics as lesser philosophers than the giants of Greek speculation, Plato and Aristotle; the transition from speculative to dogmatic philosophy is a decline. Stoicism commences the second period of Greek philosophy, starting with the Stoic and Epicurean dogmatism and ending in Skepticism. This dogmatic approach is marked by a drive for systematicity achieved by the consistent application of some abstractly universal principle to all particular cases, as found, for example, in the Stoic notion of the *criterion*. The rigidity implicit in this formal process, however, makes dogmatism “a philosophizing of the understanding, in which Plato’s and Aristotle’s speculative greatness is no longer present” (VGP 19:250/2:232). Nevertheless, there is clearly also a positive side to this event in which “the understanding seized hold of philosophy,” ending its speculative phase: “there is something deeper lying at the foundation of this turn which knowledge takes, and appears as a loss and a retrograde step, something on which the elevation of reason to the loftier spirit of modern philosophy in fact rests” (WL 5:38–39/25–26). Hegel is clear that one area of thought in which Stoics went beyond Aristotle was formal logic.

The Stoics, writes Hegel, “brought formal logic to great perfection” because they had made “abstract thought the principle” (VGP 19:273/2:254). We must remember that for Hegel, formal logic is not scientific

or philosophical (*wissenschaftlich*) logic. Formal logic is an expression of the *understanding* or *intellect* (*Verstand*), which Hegel consistently contrasts negatively with “reason” (*Vernunft*), and formal logic stands to properly *wissenschaftlich* logic in an analogous way. Formal logic is treated as an attempt to give mathematical (not conceptual) representation to thought, and it is thus essentially a branch of mathematics rather than philosophy. Hegel’s treatment of the “mathematical” fourth-figure syllogism in the “Subjective Logic” (WL 6:371–80/602–8) shows him to be well acquainted with the algebraic logic as introduced by Leibniz and practiced by Gottfried Ploucquet, the authority on logic at Tübingen when Hegel was a student there.

Stoic logic was, Hegel writes,

Logic in the sense that it expresses the activity of the understanding as conscious understanding; it is no longer as with Aristotle, at least in regard to the categories, *undecided* as to whether the forms of the understanding are not at the same time the realities of things, for the forms of thought are set forth as such for themselves. (VGP 19:273–4/2:255, emphasis added)

That is, the Stoics were able in a way to make *forms of thought* their explicit object, even though their treatment of it was not a properly philosophical one. In contrast, the suggestion seems to be that Aristotle was unable to individuate forms of thought *as* forms of thought because those thoughts could not be sufficiently abstracted from the “realities of things” they were about. Hegel’s view of the limitations of Aristotelian thought alluded to here seems to resonate with the problems implicit in the classically “representationalist” account of language that Tyler Burge (1993) traces back to Aristotle’s *On Interpretation* (Aristotle 1963, 1, 16a4–7).

On the traditional account that Burge ascribes to Aristotle, external representations, such as words or, say, pictures, will count as representations because they are understood as giving expression to some kind of representational “content” or inner mental concept. A word “chair” will thus be thought to refer to worldly *chairs* only in an indirect sense because they are taken as giving expression to the mind’s concept that *itself* refers to those entities. On the traditional view, external representations such as words will be imperfect representations because they have properties besides representational ones. For example, the word type “chair” rhymes with the word “pear” although chairs and pears may have nothing particularly distinctive in common. In contrast, the concepts that the external expressions are meant to express have *only* representational properties, making them intrinsically representational (Burge 1993, p. 310). It is at this point that the problem Hegel refers to comes into focus: If concepts

have no *non*representational properties – no properties unrelated to the properties of the objects they represent – how can they be individuated as thoughts? For this they would need to be considered in abstraction from the objects they represent, but this would seem to deprive them of any individuating properties. We have seen Hegel’s criticism of the idea that a thought could somehow result from the “superimposition” of remembered images: Some process of extracting likenesses from the images would need to be accompanied by “the negative power of rubbing off their remaining unlikenesses” (EG §455). It now seems that the problem is a deeper one: Were the *particular* unlikenesses rubbed off, would there be anything left to consider?

The process that Hegel had alluded to as the “rubbing off” of unlikenesses that is required by the formation of universals in thought is just another way of alluding to the process of analysis in which the concrete and particular are “dissolved” away in the formation of universals. What we see looming here, then, are problems for the Aristotelian “traditional” conception of thought content, and the need for some abstractive conception of the formation of thought. The Stoics, it would seem, had been able to make some progress here beyond Aristotle. They were able to separate abstract thought from the concrete objects thought is about so as to make thought available *for* thought itself. It is true that they could only do this by restricting thought to the level of the understanding and so abandoning speculative reason, but the suggestion seems clear that this was a necessary step that reason had to go through if it is to get beyond the impasse of classically speculative thought.

A key to the puzzle of how the Stoics might have been able to abstract thought from its objects may be suggested in the debate between Peripatetic and Stoic logicians over the proper object of logical inquiry. For Aristotle’s followers, as for Aristotle himself, logic was taken to be about thought itself, and language was considered an extrinsic medium for the imperfect expression of thought. For the Stoics, in contrast, thought was itself considered more a form of internal speech, with thought contents understood as abstract or incorporeal (*asomaton*) *sayables* (*lecta*) or *assertibles* (*axiomata*). The linguistic focus of the Stoics allowed them to construct sentences that broke the rules of their contemporary Greek so as to display logical form – for example, to place negation at the beginning of the sentence to express the idea that it negates the *complete* sentence and not just an element of the sentence (Bobzien 2003, pp. 90–1). Hegel thus alludes to the significant feature of Stoic logic that it was “in part a grammar and a rhetoric” (VGP 19:276/2:257), and indeed, the science of linguistics has been seen as originating in the Stoics (Halliday 2003, p. 112).

The Stoic's Conceptual Labor: Reflection as Work on Representations

In the introductions to both *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*, Hegel discusses the notion of reflection. While he often seems to have modern thinkers, and specifically Kant in mind, his comments clearly bear on the Stoics as well, thinkers he seems to treat as Kantians *avant la lettre* (Gourinat 2004, p. 537).⁶ In *Science of Logic*, he thus describes reflection as referring “to an understanding that abstracts and therefore separates, that remains fixed in its separations . . . In this self-renunciation of reason, the concept of truth is lost, is restricted to the knowledge of mere subjective truth, of mere appearances . . . *knowledge* has lapsed into *opinion*” (WL 5:38/25).⁷ And yet, “the reflection already mentioned consists in *transcending* the concrete immediate, in *determining* and *parting* it” (WL 5:39/26). This combination of the mind’s *activity* together with a lack of self-consciousness of the activity itself is apparent in the Stoic conception of the criterion as the Stoics “did not quite know whether they should define conception as impression or alteration, or in some other way” (VGP 19:274/2:255).

The problem with the activity of reflection is that the reflective subject is typically not conscious of the role of its activity in determining its objects, and it still accepts elements of the Aristotelian-empiricist view of the passivity of “impression.” To get beyond its own static and fixed determinations, it must come to “*equally transcend* its *separating* determinations and above all *connect* them”; to do this, it presumably needs to become self-conscious of its own activity. And what the self-conscious operations of reflection make clear is “the *necessary conflict* of the determinations of the understanding with themselves” (WL 5:39/26).

When Hegel says that “the conflict of determinations breaks out precisely at the point of connection” (WL 5:39/26) of those determinations it has itself separated, he seems to have Kant clearly in mind. With the idea

⁶ Here I broadly follow Robert Pippin in his understanding of the role of “reflection” in Hegel as having strongly Kantian resonances (Pippin 1989). This approach has been criticized by Stephen Houlgate, who claims that rather than being read as “an account of ‘thought’s reflective activity,’” reflection has a primarily *ontological* significance for Hegel: “reflection is what being itself proves to be at a certain point in its logical development” (Houlgate 2011, p. 142). But the danger here is to assume a simply “subjective” picture of what “thought’s reflective activity” might amount to. Hegel is clearly opposed to that: Thinking must have a worldly presence for Hegel in a way analogous, say, to the activities of walking or dancing. But such an “ontological” conception of, say, dancing, is, of course, not incompatible with the activity of dancing as having an intentional, subjective dimension. The idea of reflection without reflecting agents seems as mysterious as the presence of dancing without dancers.

⁷ In the case of Stoicism, this conclusion is drawn by their opponents, the Skeptics. In the case of Kant, it was drawn by the Romantics.

that the “reflective activity of connection belongs in itself to reason, and to rise above the determinations and attain insight into their discord is the great negative step on the way to the true concept of reason” (WL 5:39/26), Hegel is surely alluding to the antinomies that Kant sees emerge when reason is given a “constitutive” rather than merely “regulative” role. But it is this reflective fixing of thought determinations that unleashes the “conflict of determinations” driving the process of reason itself. It is only by means of the understanding and its reflective-analytic activity of isolating and fixing that there *can be* reason. It is thus that he describes, in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the “power and work of the understanding [*die Kraft und Arbeit des Verstandes*]” as “the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the absolute power” (PhG §32). Work (*Arbeit*) requires workers and, I suggest, in the post-speculative period of Greek philosophy, the Stoics represent the work of the understanding, albeit unconsciously so. The Stoics, it is often said, introduced the idea of spiritual exercises as working on “the self” (Hadot 1995, ch. 3), and the means for this often involved linguistic technologies like the writing of diaries. Work on the self seems to have involved work of another kind – the fashioning of linguistic representations of the self and its world.

It has often been pointed out that many question marks surround exactly how Hegel himself conceived of the relation between thought and language. He nowhere gives a systematic philosophical account of language, and different views of the relation of language to thought seem to be implied by passages from different parts from his own corpus (Surber 2012, p. 13; Vernon 2007). Michael Forster, in particular, has suggested that Hegel had radically changed his views on this topic at different parts of his career, and that these changes can be understood in terms of the degree to which he accepted or rejected Herder’s idea of thought’s being “dependent on and bounded by language” (Forster 2011, p. 148). For example, during his Jena years, and for the most part in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel essentially adopted some modified version of Herder’s views, but later, according to Forster, he reverted to “a more conventional dualistic picture of the relation between words and meanings,” a view that can be found, he thinks, within *Science of Logic* (Forster 2011, p. 148), while in the late 1820s, swinging back to the earlier Herderian view.

The situation with *Science of Logic*, however, may be more complicated than this. In the preface to the edition of *Science of Logic*, Book One, published in 1812, and written after the completion of Book Two (“already in the presses”) but prior to the writing of Book Three, Hegel notes that logic as what had been handed down “throughout a long inherited tradition” demands a “completely fresh start” (WL 5:16/9).

In 1831, in a new preface written almost two decades after the first for the publication of the second edition, Hegel starts by reflecting on the imperfections of the work as originally published. He repeats the claim that logic requires a complete transformation from what had been inherited from the tradition, a “new undertaking, one that had to be started right from the beginning,” but immediately softens this by noting that the existing work of logic “must be regarded as an extremely important fund, even a necessary condition, a presupposition to be gratefully acknowledged even though what it offers here and there is only a bare thread, the dead bones of a skeleton thrown together in a disorderly heap” (WL 5:19/12).

This difference in attitude to the relevance of the history of logic might be thought to follow from a change in Hegel’s attitude to the relation of thought to language, as Hegel immediately goes on to raise the issue of language. Forms of thought, he writes, “are first set out and stored in human *language*,” which penetrates “everything the human being has interiorized . . . everything that in some way or other has become for him a representation” (WL 5:20/12).⁸ Might it not be the case then that the *work* of reflection and analysis should be understood as including a dimension in which the work occurs primarily *in* language and is work *on* language? A positive answer here is suggested in Hegel’s treatment of the relation between judgments of *Dasein* and judgments of reflection in Book Three of *Science of Logic* that we have reviewed earlier in relation to Hegel’s proffered solution to the puzzle of Aristotle’s account of *epagoge*.⁹

There, as we have seen, Hegel alludes to the way in which concrete *de re* judgments can be *transformed* into abstract *de dicto* ones, and vice versa. Effectively the grammatical “S is P” form of the judgment permits reversals to take place with respect to which conceptual determination, singularity or universality, plays the grammatical role of subject. Hegel’s oscillation between these two judgment forms seems ultimately based on Leibniz’s tendency to freely translate between *de re* and *de dicto* forms, as when, in a manner anticipating Bertrand Russell’s conception of “analysis” in the early twentieth century, he translated an intensionally

⁸ This idea of language as penetrating all representation is also explicit in his account of memory in the 1830 *Encyclopaedia* Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, where the capacity to “dissolve” the reference to particular concrete objects, *contra* Aristotle, is presented as dependent on the linguistic capacity. Hegel thus points to the “necessity and connections” of the sign and language within “the system of the activity of intelligence” (EG §458R) and notes that “*speech*, and its system, *language*, give to sensations, intuitions, representations a second, higher reality than their immediate one” (EG §459).

⁹ If this is the case, then *contra* Forster’s claim it might be said that Hegel’s turn away from the Aristotelian conception of concepts may have occurred in the process of writing Book Three itself, and so earlier than Forster suggests.

understood categorical judgment into an extensionally understood “hypothetical” (or modern *conditional*) one. As Loemker has noted, for Leibniz’s predicate-in-notion conception, “the relation between predicate and subject must be understood intensionally, not extensionally. Extensionally the relation would be reversed, and the subject included in the predicate. Leibniz recognized both points of view and even discussed the rules for conversion from one to the other, but his own metaphysics of harmony required the intensional interpretation” (Loemker 1976, p. 24).

In his discussion of judgment in the “Logic of the Concept,” Hegel is explicit that the subject-predicate relation is primarily a grammatical one (WL 6:305/552–53). The actual thought expressed in the grammatical sentence should not itself, it would seem, be thought of as having a subject-predicate structure; its structure is to be conceived of in terms of relations among the determinations of “the concept”: universality, particularity, and singularity (WL 6:274–301/530–49). It is this distinction between the structure of the thought expressed and the grammatical structure of the expressing utterance that then generates the taxonomy of judgment forms we have earlier observed.¹⁰ Hegel’s sequence of iterated subject-predicate reversals might thus be seen as a type of work carried out on the material representations of thought taken in their “externality,” that is, at the maximal point of their estrangement from the thought they are meant to express.

In the logical tradition, this dimension of logic itself was represented by successive attempts to “model” thought with forms of representation taken from mathematics, in the case of Aristotle from geometry (Kneale and Kneale 1962, p. 6) and in the case of Leibniz from algebra (Hailperin 2004). These models provided objects that the formal logician worked on. Hegel, of course, refused to identify the project of logic as “thought thinking itself” with formal logic, which he took to be a branch of mathematics. Nevertheless, I take the evidence assembled here to indicate that for Hegel, while such formal activity was not sufficient, it was nevertheless *necessary* for the larger project. From the perspective of Hegel’s approach to the history of philosophy, and the history of logic itself, this might be regarded as the *truth* manifested in the life of the laboring slave, a truth needed to correct the dream of the master of a freedom achievable through a purely contemplative attitude to the world.

¹⁰ In short, each of the three conceptual determinations can be distributed over either of the subject or predicate places in the expressed sentence (Redding 2014).

5 Freedom, Norms, and Nature in Hegel: Self-Legislation or Self-Realization?

Robert Stern

One of the many things that make Hegel's thought so intriguing is deciding where to place him in the dispute between the ancients and the moderns – a polarity which he himself played a large part in popularizing. This is because on the one hand, Hegel often goes out of his way to emphasize the comparative richness and attractiveness of classical thought, as against the superficial and reductive outlook of the moderns; on the other hand, he is in no doubt about the historical significance of the modern world, and how in many ways the ancient world had to be surpassed. As Hegel puts it with characteristic ambivalence in the *Phenomenology* with reference to Greek ethical life, "Reason *must* withdraw from this happy state" (PhG 267/214). While the transition is somehow inevitable and required, what is left behind still represents something of an ideal which is lost. And it is clear that Hegel holds that some moderns have gone too far away from the wisdom of the ancients, with Kant as one prominent example amongst others.

Still, this leaves the commentator on Hegel needing to strike a balance, and different options are available. One of the distinctive features of Robert Pippin's enormously important contribution, I think, has been to make Hegel's commitment to the modern central to his reading. Thus, while acknowledging the significance of classical thought to Hegel's work, for Pippin it is ultimately Hegel's modernism, and specifically his *post-Kantianism*, that makes him a key philosophical figure. Of course, what Kantianism and thus post-Kantianism amount to is itself highly contestable. Nonetheless, understandably enough, for Pippin unless this is made central to our reading of Hegel's thought, we will be lost – and where this approach applies to both Hegel's theoretical and practical philosophy.

When it comes to the theoretical philosophy, this outlook is articulated most clearly in the Introduction to the now-classic *Hegel's Idealism*, in what I think of as a statement of Pippin's Principle:

More to the general and more obvious point, however, much of the standard view of how Hegel passes beyond Kant into speculative philosophy makes very puzzling, to the point of unintelligibility, how Hegel could have been the post-Kantian philosopher he understood himself to be; that is, how he could have accepted, as he did, Kant's revelations about the fundamental inadequacies of the metaphysical tradition, could have enthusiastically agreed with Kant that the metaphysics of the "beyond," of substance, and of traditional views of God and infinity were forever discredited, and then could have promptly created a systematic metaphysics as if he has never heard of Kant's critical epistemology. Just attributing moderate philosophic intelligence to Hegel should at least make one hesitate before construing him as a post-Kantian philosopher with a precritical metaphysics. (Pippin 1989, p. 7)

Following this Principle, Pippin himself developed a Kantian reading of Hegel's idealism, which while of course it goes beyond Kant in significant respects still has a recognizably transcendental flavor – a flavor that has not endeared Pippin's reading to all tastes.

Similarly, in Pippin's treatment of Hegel's practical philosophy, he has underlined Hegel's commitment to a Kantian notion of freedom as self-legislation, notwithstanding their other well-known differences. For Pippin, this goes along with a characteristically modern move away from nature and thus from any sort of Aristotelian naturalism in ethics; the puzzles that arise for Kantian self-legislation are answered by Hegel's turn to history, and the move from the "I" to the "we." So for Pippin, again, while Hegel undoubtedly drew something from the Greeks, his outlook is fundamentally a modern one, and highly indebted to Kant, despite their less significant divergences.

Others, however, have put the emphasis in a different place in their reading of Hegel, seeking to push the balance more in favor of the Greeks than Pippin seems inclined to do, whether this is Plato, Neo-Platonism, or Aristotle, or some combination of the three. In theoretical philosophy, this has led to more Platonic or Aristotelian readings of the *Logic* in particular, which treat Hegel's project there less as a transcendental inquiry into "our conceptual scheme"¹ and more as an ontological inquiry into the fundamental structure of being qua being. Of course, those emphasizing the ancient over the modern in this way must pay due attention to the corresponding role of the modern in Hegel's thought. They too must respect Pippin's Principle to this extent, but they will claim to do so without needing to take as much of the transcendental turn as Pippin himself appears to think is necessary if the Principle is to

¹ Pippin 1989, p. 8. In his current work on Hegel's *Logic*, however, it appears that Pippin's reading has taken a more Aristotelian and less Kantian turn.

be respected. I have argued elsewhere that this can perhaps be achieved.²

In this essay, however, I do not want to discuss Hegel's theoretical philosophy from this perspective, but his practical philosophy. The same debate concerning ancient versus modern comes up here, where once again we find Pippin on the side of the moderns. Thus, those who take the other side must face an equivalent of Pippin's Principle in this arena too: just as Pippin thinks attributing "moderate philosophical intelligence" to Hegel in theoretical philosophy means we must see him as taking the transcendental critique of metaphysics seriously, so he thinks attributing such intelligence to Hegel in practical philosophy means we must see him as taking Kant's self-legislation thesis seriously, in a way that makes a fundamental break with anything resembling Aristotelian ethics. It is this application of Pippin's Principle that I wish to explore, where ultimately, I will argue, it misses the way that Hegel's ethics remains in the Aristotelian perfectionist tradition, albeit a perfectionism of a significantly post-Kantian form.

I begin by saying something about what I mean by perfectionism. I then look at a dispute between John McDowell and Pippin wherein Pippin argues against any perfectionist reading of Hegel for failing to recognize the essential modernity of Hegel's position, and thus its underlying Kantian commitments. I then point to evidence to show that Hegel's outlook remains an Aristotelian one, but where Kant's impact is still acknowledged in the form that Hegel's perfectionism ultimately takes, as a perfectionism that relates to the structure of the will of the rational agent and is thus of a distinctively post-Kantian kind.

1 Perfectionism

To a surprisingly large extent, "perfectionism" remains the great unknown of ethics. On the one hand, virtually all the great ethicists can be viewed as perfectionists in some broad sense – that is, as making some conception of the flourishing life for human beings, the realization of our fundamental capacities or natures, central to their ethics and social philosophy. What distinguishes them is their different accounts of what that flourishing consists in. Taken in this way, at least the following could be put on this list without raising great controversy: Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Spinoza, Leibniz, Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche, Mill, Bradley, Green, and Dewey. The question I want to concentrate on here, which equally raises the question (noted earlier) concerning Hegel's place between the ancients

² Cf. Stern 2009, and also Kreines 2015.

and the moderns, is whether Hegel should be included as part of this tradition. I do so by focusing on a recent dispute between McDowell and Pippin.

Roughly speaking, the terms of the dispute are as follows. In some of his earlier papers on Aristotle, McDowell questions the way in which Aristotle should be considered a naturalist. Pippin takes that to show that nature has no place in ethics, thus cutting the ground out from under any perfectionist approach – but, he argues, McDowell fails to see this fully. Pippin thinks Hegel shows a more consistent repudiation of naturalism in his ethics, given the priority he gives to “spirit” over “nature,” which requires a shift towards Kantian self-legislation instead. On this account, norms are not to be derived from what is required for the proper realization of our nature qua human beings, but from the form of practical reason, to which Hegel then gives a historicist turn. I argue, however, that looking at Hegel’s *Logic* suggests that Pippin may be too quick to reject the Aristotelian aspect of Hegel’s ethics – so that while (like McDowell) Hegel may be taken as rejecting certain ways in which perfectionism might be developed, Pippin goes too far in claiming that he wanted to reject it altogether in favor of a more thoroughgoing Kantian position. As a result, I argue, Hegel can legitimately be placed in the perfectionist canon after all.

In order to explain what I mean here by perfectionism, naturalism, and self-realization, it is helpful to start with a passage from Terence Irwin:

[Aristotle] defends an account of the human good as happiness (*eudaimonia*), consisting in the fulfilment of human nature, expressed in the various human virtues. His position is teleological, in so far as it seeks the best guide for action in an ultimate end, eudaimonist, in so far as it identifies the ultimate end with happiness, and naturalist, in so far as it identifies virtue and happiness in a life that fulfils the nature and capacities of rational human nature.³ (Irwin 2007, p. 4)

So, according to the Aristotelian eudaemonist, the human good consists in happiness; human happiness consists in the fulfilment or realization of human nature; and human nature can be defined in terms of what capacities are essential to human beings, qua members of a natural kind. Thus, the good of a human being is that which promotes the species nature of the individual qua human being and their distinctive capacities, where virtuous action by individuals will lead to their good/flourishing, by developing capacities in this way. So, we can take what it is that leads to human happiness, understood as the realization of human capacities, as

³ Irwin’s three-volume work (Irwin 2007, 2008, 2009) is a masterful historical study of the Aristotelian naturalist tradition in the context of the development of ethics. For a classic systematic study, see Hurka 1993.

a guide to action and thus as determining its norms and the character of the virtues.

Now, while a position of this sort can be called eudaimonist, it can also be called perfectionist, because it takes happiness to consist in the proper development of our distinctive capacities, rather than simply pleasure or desire satisfaction. On the other hand, it may be distinguished from a narrower form of perfectionism, which takes this development to be a good in itself, rather than as an aspect of the well-being of the individual. Perfectionism in both these forms involves a picture of the proper development of our capacities as the kinds of creatures we are, and it builds normativity out of that – which is what makes it a kind of naturalism. So the fundamental question is the following: can the appeal to nature do this kind of work, when it comes to human beings? This is the issue at the center of the dispute between McDowell and Pippin that I want to look at further, as it relates to Hegel.

2 McDowell on Aristotle

The key paper that forms the basis for the dispute is McDowell's classic text "Two Sorts of Naturalism," which draws out different ways in which Aristotle's naturalism might be understood. One way might be to see Aristotle as trying to use his naturalism to convince people to be virtuous, as a way in which they might then flourish, and thus as a way of making their lives go well given their natures. But, McDowell argues (following others such as Bradley and Prichard),⁴ this would be a mistake, for the reason why a virtuous agent would act nobly (for example) is that that action is noble; for any further reason related to flourishing to come into play would just detract from that and give the virtuous person the wrong reasons to act ethically, based on their interests.

Having made that fairly familiar point, McDowell adds a further argument more relevant to the later dispute with Pippin, namely that for us qua rational agents, appeals to what is natural to us and thus might enable us to flourish as natural beings can cut no ice anyway – so the approach is doomed from the start. McDowell illustrates the problem here with the idea of a "rational wolf," whereby "a rational wolf would be able to let his mind roam over possibilities of behaviour other than what comes naturally to wolves," where "this reflects a deep connection between reason and freedom; we cannot make sense of a creature's acquiring reason unless it has genuinely alternative possibilities of action, over which its thought can play" (McDowell 1996, p. 170).

⁴ Cf. Bradley 1927, pp. 58–9; Prichard 1912 and 1929.

McDowell then considers how this rational wolf might respond faced with some behavior that he sees comes naturally to wolves, such as hunting cooperatively in a pack: because he is a rational wolf, he can step back and ask of that behavior “why should I do this?” Once the question has arisen, McDowell asks, “how can it help to appeal to what wolves need?”

“Why should I pull my weight?”, says our reflective wolf, wondering whether to idle through the hunt but still grab his share of the prey. Suppose we respond, truly enough: “Wolves need to pool their energies, if their style of hunting is to be effective.” If our wolf has stepped back from his natural impulse and taken up the critical stance, why should what we say impress him? (McDowell 1996, p. 171)

What is the problem here? The difficulty is that while wolves *in general*, as a kind, may need to work cooperatively as a pack in a way that makes it best for them as a kind, this does not necessarily make it best for the individual wolf which (as a rational wolf) is able to distinguish between the two (McDowell 1996, p. 172). So, McDowell argues, if we do try to ground an appeal to virtue in some further reason to do with flourishing, we cannot base it on the flourishing of the *kind* as the individual can always question the significance of that to him- or herself. The only flourishing that will seem relevant will be *individual* flourishing, thereby collapsing ethics into self-interest. The lesson McDowell draws from this is that the “grounding” project is hopeless, and “Aristotelian naturalism” should not be conceived of in this way:

[Aristotle’s] naturalism simply does not promise to validate putative rational requirements. That he is not concerned about grounding is anyway strongly suggested by the fact that he addresses his ethical lectures only to people who have been properly brought up. (McDowell 1996, p. 174)

Aristotelian naturalism in this first sense, as a response to a “why be moral?” question, is therefore rejected.

McDowell then diagnoses why we (but not Aristotle) might feel the pull of such a grounding problem, which he traces back to our scientism and disenchanted view of the world, which leads us to lose sight of the idea that to virtuous individuals, the experience they have may be “directly” reason giving without the need for grounding – by for example seeing that this sort of action would be cruel, and so not doing it, where this is the result of a form of upbringing that constitutes our “second nature.”⁵ However, McDowell does not think that following Aristotle here therefore replaces considerations of our nature with just second nature, whereby the former would drop out altogether, and if it did, we would

⁵ For more on this theme, see McDowell 1994, pp. 78–84.

seem to have abandoned naturalism entirely. For McDowell thinks it is still possible to give first nature an important role in ethics, but not as a response to the grounding problem.

McDowell identifies two other roles for first nature to fulfil. First, it is important “because the innate endowment of human beings must put limits on the shapings of second nature that are possible for them” (McDowell 1996, p. 190); that is, there are naturally defined limits to our capacities for reflection and enculturation that the processes of second nature can take. Second, from within the reflection of the virtuous agent, considerations of first nature related to flourishing will be the sort of thing that he or she will take into account when seeking some “reassurance” regarding whether the practices and norms that have shaped his or her ethical sensibility are ultimately a good thing. This is not because the individual is wondering whether, *qua* individual, he or she should adopt those practices (that is the grounding issue again), but rather, whether we as a group have done well to adopt them, given what our flourishing consists in:

First nature matters not only . . . in helping to shape the space in which reflection must take place, but also in that first-natural facts can be part of what reflection takes into account. This is where we can register the relevance of what human beings need in order to do well, in a sense of “doing well” that is not just Aristotle’s “acting in accordance with the virtues.” Consider a rational wolf whose acquisition of practical reason included being initiated into a tradition in which co-operative behaviour in the hunt is regarded as admirable, and so as worth going in for in its own right. What wolves need might figure in a bit of reflection that might help reassure him that when he acquired a second nature with that shape, his eyes were opened to real reasons for acting. The reflection would be Neurathian, so it would not weigh with a wolf who has never acquired such a mode of valuation of conduct, or one who has come unstuck from it. And there would be no irrationality in thus failing to be convinced. But this need not undermine the reassurance, if the reflection that yields it is self-consciously Neurathian. The point stands that what members of one’s species need is not guaranteed to appeal to practical reason. But the point is harmless to the genuine rationality of virtue, which is visible (of course!) only from a standpoint from which it is open to view. (McDowell 1996, pp. 190–91)

McDowell hereby argues for a second sort of naturalism that is compatible with “a fundamentally Aristotelian outlook,” even if Aristotle himself (McDowell thinks) did not raise these questions insofar as he “is notably unconcerned to defend, against potential competitors, the way things look to the kind of person he thinks of as virtuous” (McDowell 1996, p. 189).

So, as I understand it, McDowell’s picture is as follows. To the well-brought-up rational wolf (or human being), various kinds of cooperative behavior will just seem to be what is called for in the situation, as the

correct thing to do, and that will be his or her reason for doing it, for, in this sort of case, “What directly influences the will is the valuations of actions that have come to be second nature” (McDowell 1996, p. 191). Nonetheless, one can still seek reassurance about this upbringing and enculturation itself: for example, one might ask whether a “debunking” explanation for it would be better, à la Nietzsche or Marx or some other “master of suspicion.”⁶ And this is where claims about our nature and flourishing can come in, to provide the reassurance that these practices and their norms relate to that nature in the right way.

It is important to recognize, however, that the kind of reassurance being considered here is not the same as the kind of grounding that the lone rational wolf was seeking: as a wolf working from outside the practice of virtue, he was looking for reasons to be moral that would lead to *his* individual good, where an appeal to what is good for wolves in general is not going to satisfy. But in looking for reassurance concerning the practices of our own enculturation – to “help reassure him that when he acquired a second nature with that shape, his eyes were opened to real reasons for acting” – this is not what we are asking about: we want to know rather that these practices are not merely distortive and corrupted ideological constructs; seeing that the practices are good for us as a whole, not just for the individual concerned, can help provide us with the confidence we need. The “reflective reassurance” provided by the connection we might find between “virtue and doing well” thus operates at “one remove from the subject’s rational will” (McDowell 1996, p. 191): that is (I take it), what provides the agent in question with reasons to act still only comes from seeing the act as noble or courageous or whatever, not as conducive to well-being either of the individual concerned or of the group as a whole; but this latter connection can still play a role in the “reflective background for a second nature that values courageous actions” (McDowell 1996, p. 191), where McDowell puts this idea as follows:

This should be seen as a case of a relation that Wittgenstein draws to our attention, between our concepts and the facts of nature that underlie them. The concepts would not be the same if the facts of (first) nature were different, and the facts help to make it intelligible that the concepts are as they are, but this does

⁶ Cf. McDowell 1996, p. 190: “People come unstuck from a traditional ethical outlook when reflection does break out, and they come to think, rightly or wrongly, that they have seen through the outlook’s pretensions of rational cogency. If something is to be an intelligible candidate for being the way second nature should be, it must at least be intelligible that the associated outlook could seem to survive this reflective scrutiny.” Nietzsche would seem to have become “unstuck” in this way, when he writes: “In so far as morality *condemns* as morality and *not* with regard to the aims and objects of life, it is a specific error with regard to which one should show no sympathy, an *idiosyncrasy of the degenerate* which has caused an unspeakable amount of harm!” (Nietzsche 1968, p. 46).

not mean that correctness and incorrectness in the application of the concepts can be captured by requirements spelled out at the level of the underlying facts. (McDowell 1996, p. 193)

In this way, then, McDowell offers an account of the place for perfectionism in ethics, and with it a kind of naturalism, not as a form of “external validation” designed to make sense to someone outside our ethical practices, but as a legitimate way of reflecting on them from within.⁷

I now want to look at Pippin’s response to McDowell, which in part uses Hegel to challenge the role that McDowell gives to nature. I suggest that Pippin misses an important aspect of that role and so also misrepresents the place of Hegel in these debates.

3 Pippin on McDowell: Nature versus Spirit

In his 2002 article, tellingly entitled “Leaving Nature Behind,” Pippin focuses on the role McDowell gives to nature in both his theoretical philosophy and his practical philosophy, but I concentrate on the latter. Pippin summarizes his point as follows:

My main question will be whether we gain that much, free ourselves from that much, if we can come to see our capacity for normative stances as “second-nature natural.” I want to offer some suggestions that we are better off leaving nature out of the picture altogether, and that doing so begs no questions. This will offer a limited defense of what McDowell, in a sweeping indictment, calls “subjectivism.” (Pippin 2002a, p. 60)

And he thinks Hegel is on his side:

Said very crudely, the developmental “direction” of Hegel’s system (a systematic account of forms of intelligibility, ever better explanatory adequacy) is “away” from nature and “towards”, “spirit,” *Geist*; his “logic” concerns more the inadequacy of *appeals* to nature as *explicans*. (Pippin 2002a, p. 60)

For Pippin, therefore, what makes Hegel a modern thinker is this step away from nature towards spirit, a step that he thinks McDowell’s Aristotelian commitments prevent him from appreciating in Hegel. As a result, Pippin’s basic strategy is to accept McDowell’s rejection of crude Aristotelian naturalism (as grounding), but then to argue that this shows that we can do without nature altogether, and so arrive at an account that is more purely social and historical in a way which Pippin thinks is more properly Hegelian.

Pippin therefore accepts McDowell’s rejection of the idea that perfection and flourishing could ground ethics from the perspective of the

⁷ See also McDowell 1980, p. 19 and Hursthouse 1999, p. 194.

individual who is outside ethics, but he thinks McDowell then misses that naturalism can then drop out altogether. The answer to McDowell's reassurance question must come instead from an account of the historical development of the practices of the ethical community of which the individual is part:

The question is: how does a claim of reason, or a commitment to an ideal or goal, become part of the fabric of some form of life? How is the achievement of a genuinely common mindedness (something quite different from a codified, explicit belief system, or subjective commitment to ideals) possible? How could there be a common mindedness such that our reactions to conduct that is objectionable have become so intimate and such a part of that fabric that the conduct being the sort of conduct it is counts *thereby* as reason enough to condemn it. But to understand this, we don't need to know anything about growth, organic life, cultivated nature, and so forth. We need to understand "the labor of the Concept" in time. (Pippin 2002a, p. 68)

Pippin argues that the answer to the reassurance question must take this form, as appeals to nature cannot carry any weight with us: what does it matter that the process of enculturation is somehow "natural" to us, and what does "natural" mean here anyway?

If the point is simply that given the various biological and neurological capacities we are endowed with by nature and evolution, human beings have (do as a matter of fact have) the capacity to make, sustain, hold themselves to and pass on in historical memory various kinds of normative institutions, and can form the characters such institutions require and can create practices that allow for developing and revising the various claims for institutional authority inherent in such institutions, what is gained by declaring so insistently that all of *this* must be understood as a "realization of second nature"? To adopt Rortyeian rhetoric, it sounds more like an attempt at an exaggerated compliment than a substantive point. (Pippin 2002a, p. 69)

The fundamental issue, for Pippin, is that ultimately we are *free* of nature, and in the end it must drop out of our ethical reflections in a way that (he thinks) Hegel saw and in a way that makes Hegel radically non-naturalist and non-perfectionist, and so ultimately opposed to anything like McDowell's position:

A culture (*Bildung*) in this sense, while it is something we must have the requisite natural, enabling capacities to build and sustain, *is only* something that we build and sustain. "Subjectivism" then, directing us as it does toward the historical dissatisfactions and tensions responsible for the institutional change we effect, seems unproblematic enough and to be directing us properly toward history not nature as the domain where accounts of human practices are to be based. In Hegel's somewhat puzzling language, while "*Geist*" is not non-natural or immaterial, it *is* "a product of itself." (Pippin 2002a, p. 70)

For Pippin, then, it looks as if when we want something like McDowell's reassurance that our practices are as they ought to be, we can turn to history rather than nature, where that history can be understood in dialectical terms, as the progressive overcoming of tensions and problems as we move forward – from slavery to universal rights, or from monarchy to democracy, for example. It is that historical process underlying our practices, rather than any appeal to first or second nature, that is needed to do the work:

If Geist is a distinctive kind by not being a natural but a “self-developing” kind, we could be said to be learning collectively the form of life, the institutional form of life especially, suited to such a historical, collectively self-determining being. This means that our analysis of this result is not essentialist or empirical but “reconstructive,” a reconstruction in which the meaning of large-scale social and political change is integrated into a view of what, wholly internally, wholly in terms of their own self-understanding, might count as progressive. (Pippin 2014b, p. 729)

This turn from nature to history in Pippin's account goes along with the impact of what he takes to be Kant's major innovation in normative philosophy (albeit one partly inspired by Rousseau), namely the idea of *self-legislation*.⁸ For not only is spirit able to free itself from nature, but it is able to authorize norms for itself, rather than have such norms given to it externally, where this is said to be a vital aspect of what it means to be autonomous. At the same time, according to Pippin, Kant's model for this self-legislative account is seen by Hegel as too transcendental and ahistorical, where again it is the collective process of legislation through history that needs to be added to the basic Kantian story, a story which is distinctively modern.⁹

Pippin's case is undoubtedly a powerful one, on both interpretative and philosophical grounds. Nonetheless, I want to argue that it underestimates the significant perfectionist strand in Hegel's thinking and thus ignores something important in McDowell's account. Put simply, while for Pippin Hegel's modernism means he is committed to abandoning Aristotelian naturalism altogether, I argue that it rather means that this naturalism is transformed into a type of post-Kantian perfectionism, which is a perfectionism nonetheless.

⁸ Cf. Pippin 2002a, p. 65: “Put a different, much more general way, the relevant image for our ‘always already engaged’ conceptual and practical capacities in the German idealist tradition is *legislative power*, not empirical discrimination and deliberative judgment, and the force of this image of legislative power makes it difficult to integrate what McDowell says about the overall effect of *Bildung* – that it simply ‘opens our eyes’ and allows us to ‘see the reasons that are always there whether we notice them or not’ – with the Kantian and even Hegelian elements he has also imported.”

⁹ Cf. also Pippin 2008a, p. 91.

4 Hegel's Logic of Value

When asserting that “the developmental ‘direction’ of Hegel’s system . . . is ‘away’ from nature and ‘towards’ ‘spirit,’ *Geist*,” Pippin cites the relative insignificance of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* to the rest of his system: “As anyone who has slogged through it knows, there is a lot there that seems to turn no other wheel elsewhere in what Hegel says, and very little in the *Philosophy of Spirit* seems to depend on it or refer back to it” (Pippin 2002a, p. 60).

Some might question whether this does proper justice to the joys of the *Philosophy of Nature*. But more importantly for our purposes, Pippin does not mention the *Logic* here, where it is arguable that it is in this text, rather than the *Philosophy of Nature*, that the best evidence for Hegel’s Aristotelian naturalism can be found. The relevant discussion is the crucial third book of the *Logic*, and in his treatment of the Concept (*Begriff*), Judgment, and Syllogism. Here, Hegel essentially offers a hierarchy of forms of judgment and syllogism, based on how they treat the relation between the conceptual “moments” of universal, particular, and individual. At the bottom of the hierarchy are the judgments and syllogisms of existence, respectively, where there is at best a superficial relation between individual and universal, as the latter forms an accidental property of the former, for example, “This rose is red.” Hegel then moves through other forms of judgment and syllogism, as this relation becomes more substantial, until the subject-term of the judgment deals with a natural kind, and the predicate is essential to individuals of this kind. The corresponding syllogism concerns the genus to which the individual belongs and properties that are essential to members of that genus, for example, the categorical syllogism “Gaius is a man; men are mortal; therefore Gaius is mortal.”

Now, it is precisely at this point, when a judgment introduces reference to the kind to which the individual belongs, that Hegel brings in *value* and *normativity*. Thus, what Hegel calls the “judgment of the Concept [*Begriff*]” are normative judgments concerning the individual based on how well or badly it exemplifies the universal that constitutes its nature, for example, “This house, lacking a roof, is bad.” So, while at the simplest and most basic level, judgments and syllogisms involve claims about individuals and their simple properties, Hegel holds that it is not possible to rest at merely this level of judgment and syllogism. Rather, it is necessary to bring in more sophisticated forms of thought, involving more complex conceptual structures, to make sense of the world. In particular, it is necessary to thinking of some individual objects as instantiating natural kinds which characterize their essential natures, where this introduces a significant evaluative element. To understand a concept as representing a natural

kind is to understand individuals falling under that kind in terms of certain characteristics; failing to possess those characteristics is then a fault in the individual qua member of the kind. So, for example, a rose that dies prematurely, or fails to attract sufficient bees to be pollinated or is odorless but belongs to a species with a scent is a “bad” rose. These norms are not based on mere statistical generalizations but reflect claims about what it is for a rose of this species to be a proper exemplar of its kind. Thus, for Hegel, value and normativity enter in as a consequence of his conception of the relation between individuals and their fundamental natures. The question of their goodness or badness, and even of their “truth” and “finitude,” for him seems to rest on this relation:

The subject then expresses the relation of that particularity to its constitution, i.e. to its genus and, with this, expresses what ... makes up the content of the predicate (*this* – the immediate individuality – *house* – genus –, *so and so constituted* – particularity –, is good or bad) – *apodictic* judgment. – *All things* are a *genus* (their determination and purpose) in one *individual* actuality with a *particular* constitution; and their finitude consists in the fact that what is their particular [character] may or may not be adequate to the universal.¹⁰

According to the *Logic*, it appears, evaluative judgments only make sense by bringing in a consideration of what it is to be a properly functioning member of a kind, which realizes itself in this way.

Now, it is this aspect of Hegel’s thought that then seems to resonate with the neo-Aristotelianism of writers such as Foot and Thompson.¹¹ Foot and Thompson have argued that this is the best way to understand the operation of normativity in Aristotle as well. Thus, for example, Foot writes:

“Natural goodness,” as I define it, which is attributable only to living things themselves and to their parts, characteristics, and operations, is intrinsic or “autonomous” goodness in that it depends directly on the relation of an individual to the “life form” of its species ... Thus evaluation of an individual living thing in its own right, with no reference to our interests or desires, is possible where there is intersection of two types of propositions: on the one hand, Aristotelian categoricals (life-form descriptions relating to the species), and on the other, propositions about particular individuals that are the subjects of evaluations.¹²

¹⁰ EL §179. See also SL 349/585: “The subject of the apodictic judgement (‘the house, as so and so constituted, is *good*,’ ‘the action, as so and so *constituted*, is right’) includes, *first*, the universal, or what it *ought to be*, *second*, its *constitution*; the latter contains the *ground* why a predicate of the judgement of the concept does or does not pertain to it, that is, whether the subject corresponds to its concept or not. This judgement is now *truly* objective; or it is the *truth* of the judgement in general.”

¹¹ Cf. Thompson 2008, p. 12: “The project of an ‘analytic’ or ‘analytical’ Hegelianism or of an ‘analytical Marxism’ (however well- or ill-advised such a thing might be) must see itself as aiming at a form of analytic Aristotelianism.”

¹² Foot 2001, pp. 26–7 and 33. See also Thompson 2008, pp. 80–1.

So, it would appear, on this account as well as Hegel's, a proper use of concepts – in Foot's terms, "Aristotelian categoricals" – must involve an implicit normativity, as it requires thinking of things as members of natural kinds and this itself requires thinking of them as good or bad exemplars of their kinds, in a way that appears to be fundamentally Aristotelian.

5 Hegel, McDowell, Pippin

So where does this brief investigation into Hegel's account of normativity and value leave us in the debate between McDowell and Pippin? On the face of it, it suggests that for Hegel a kind of Aristotelian naturalism is inescapable. This is not the first kind of naturalism that McDowell rejects, whereby an appeal to the kind is used to ground ethics, as a way of persuading the non-moral agent to be moral. Here Pippin and McDowell agree that, like Aristotle, Hegel sees "ethical life" as providing a prior context of education and enculturation, within which this kind of question does not arise – or, if it does, it cannot really be answered. Still, naturalism can serve the second role McDowell suggests, of reassuring us that ethical life is along the right lines, by appeal to a conception of what it is to be a good or a bad human being, qua exemplar of that kind, where this kind of normativity is an inescapable aspect of our thinking at any satisfactory level: to have the concept of a human being is to have the concept of what it takes to be a properly developed human being, against which our practices can be assessed. This view would seem to fit the McDowellian picture rather well.

However, there is a clear line of response from Pippin, which gets at the heart of his argument for "leaving nature behind." For, even if what I have said about the *Logic* is right, this does not show that Hegel was a naturalist in any serious sense, as it is not in terms of our *natural* kind that we are assessed as good or bad in this way, as plant or animals might be. So, what it is to be a good dog may require the dog to have certain features or to realize certain capacities: Fido is better qua dog than Rex because Fido has four legs not just three, is able to run better as a result, is therefore more likely to breed successfully, and so on. This judgment makes sense in terms of the "natural endowments" of dogs, that is, what they are characteristically "given" by nature. But for us (Pippin can rightly argue) it is very different: maybe nature gives us all sort of things, but whether our life goes well or badly is largely independent of that, so a different kind of normativity is involved, unrelated to our "species being" or natural life form. So, if I am missing a finger or a leg, or cannot run fast or mate successfully, it is not clear that this marks me as "bad" or

failing to flourish in any sense; only a misplaced biologism could make it seem otherwise. Precisely because (as Pippin argues) “spirit” is largely “free” of nature, this kind of claim is inappropriate for us. Thus, while there may be such a thing as the “good life” for dogs or beavers or cows based on their natural endowments and proper functioning, there is no such thing in our case. We are in the realm of spirit and not nature; our norms must be self-legislated rather than “read off” our being in the world.

However, while this worry marks an important difference between us and other natural beings, it is not clear how much it ultimately matters from the perspective of reading Hegel as a perfectionist and as a kind of naturalist. It could still be argued that while Hegel does not take our essential properties to all be those that would be identified in purely biological terms,¹³ he still thinks there are such essential properties, which can ground the normative claims he wants to make. In this respect, it is useful to compare the categories of “human being” and of “person”: while one can think of the former in purely biological terms, associated with various sort of biological functioning, the latter is a different notion that brings in a different conception of proper functioning and thus normativity, while equally characterizing me as a substance universal. Thus, while the category of “person” may not be a natural kind in the biological sense (it is not needed as part of biological taxonomy), it is still a natural kind in the philosophical sense, out of which a related kind of normativity can be built, qua good or bad exemplifications of personhood. In this way, our fundamental difference from animals can be marked. For them, normativity only operates at the level of their natural kind, while for us the logical structure of normative claims as based on the essential nature of the individual can still be maintained.

Now, I suggest something very close to this structure can be found in Hegel’s treatment of normativity in his *Philosophy of Right*, where the key starting point is his characterization of our nature as that of free rational agents, which in turn leads him to *the will*, and what it is to be an agent with a will that is properly structured (see PR §§5–7). Now this, of course, does not fit any purely biological taxonomy. Nonetheless, this does not mean that Hegel is denying that for us as *agents* rather than as merely human beings biologically conceived, there is a good and bad way for us to be, particularly concerning the structure of our wills. Indeed Hegel argues that the structure of the will should involve a characteristic kind of unity of different elements that is a commonplace in the perfectionist tradition.¹⁴

¹³ See also Rand 2015. ¹⁴ For further discussion, see Stern 2015.

To see how this approach is compatible with an essentially Aristotelian outlook, compare it with Irwin's schematic presentation of Aristotle's view:

(1) Human nature consists in rational agency, that is, in exercising the capacity to guide behaviour by practical reason. (2) The human good consists in the full actualization of this capacity in fulfilling our other capacities. (3) The virtues are the different ways of actualizing this capacity.¹⁵

It seems clear that one can commit to (1) without thinking that "human" here is being used in a purely biological sense. Arguably it is this that Kant helped Hegel to see, in a way that then took his perfectionism in a particular direction, towards a consideration of our nature as free agents, but to see Kant's impact on Hegel in this way is very different from Pippin's proposal.

It therefore makes sense to claim that Hegel has a perfectionist picture of self-actualization or self-realization, albeit where the self is not conceived in narrowly biologicistic terms. In one sense, then, Pippin is right in claiming that spirit is more than nature qua biology or "life" as discussed in the *Philosophy of Nature*. But taking the *Logic* seriously can also show that he is wrong on the deeper point (which I think McDowell would be happy to accommodate): Hegel remains a perfectionist and naturalist of sorts, with a fundamentally Aristotelian picture at the center of his thinking. On this basis, therefore, I would claim that Hegel's ethics fundamentally belongs to the perfectionist tradition, and the perfectionists that came after him, particularly Marx and the British Idealists, can be said to have been following in his footsteps.

But, it could be asked, what happens to two fundamental features of Pippin's reading on this picture: namely, the emphasis on self-legislation and hence autonomy and the emphasis on the significance of history to the Hegelian conception of normativity and to *The Philosophy of Right* itself? Surely both are essential to any properly recognizable Hegelian approach? My brief response to the first question is that the issue concerning self-legislation and particularly its supposed link to autonomy is much more complex and contestable than this suggests, as I have argued at length elsewhere (Stern 2012). And on the question of history, one way to accommodate this might be to adopt the "historicized naturalism" that has been proposed by Allen Wood. Wood's proposal echoes Pippin's focus on the historical relativity of our practices in relation to a "variable and malleable notion" of the human good: "Historicized naturalism has no general conception of the human good, but for any infant it will be born into

¹⁵ Irwin 2009, p. 882.

a determinate social and historical situation, inheriting from its culture a determinate human self-understanding,” so that as a result “historicized naturalism tells us to choose the childrearing practices that will actualize the self of the newborn child *on that understanding*” (Wood 1990, pp. 33–4, my emphasis). However, I would not be prepared to go even that far in a concession to Hegel’s supposed historicism. For, it seems to me that while it is right that for Hegel, self-actualization may occur equally well within different social practices in different societies at levels below those outlined in the *Philosophy of Right*, it is still the case that the fundamental structure of the will that is presented in the Introduction to that text is the same and fixed, as are the fundamental social structures which Hegel takes to realize that will; they are therefore not warranted merely as the form of institutional structure that best fit the conception of our nature prevalent at that historical period. I find no suggestion here that Hegel’s naturalism is a historicized one in Wood’s sense. I would argue instead that the importance of history for Hegel lies in helping us see how this form of self-understanding has been developed, and thus how this distinctively modern conception of the will as a balance of “universal,” “particular,” and “individual” moments has emerged; but this is to make history the ratio cognoscendi not the ratio essendi of what it is to be a free rational agent. Moreover, taken in this way, one can also make sense of the fundamental Hegelian thought that the history of a certain sort of philosophical project might be treated as having reached an “end” in the modern period, as this conception of agency has finally come into view, which enables us to properly reflect on our ethical and social practices in the way that *The Philosophy of Right* tries to do.

6 Conclusion

One way to focus the issues that I have been addressing is to consider the following passage from a review of one of Pippin’s works by Wayne Martin:

We can now see the outlines of a difficulty for Pippin’s Hegel. Extrapolate to a community of Hegelian anorexics, each identifying profoundly with their acts of self-starvation, and finding recognition and validation from others in their community. The practice of giving and asking for reasons operates within such a community, and anorexic reasons are recognized as genuine reasons – relative to the distinctive values that structure this particular local world. Members of the community risk their lives, to be sure, but they do so in pursuing something that they value above mere biological existence. To round out the Hegelian picture we can add in a reflective apologist, constructing just-so historical narratives that

celebrate the anorexic commitment to “break the power of natural inclination” – finding therein the culmination of mankind’s emergence from its merely animal nature. Does the Hegelian have to concede that anorexia has here become a paradigm of modern free agency? (Martin 2010, p. 290)

Martin brings out nicely, I think, how in an attempt to “leave nature behind,” Pippin arguably goes too far and fails to see how there is still space in Hegel’s account for a basis for normativity in the conditions for flourishing rational agency itself, not just in the kind of dialectical historical narrative that we may be able to tell about our practices. In this way, it could be argued, we properly respect the way in which Hegel harnessed the insights not only of the moderns, but of the ancients too.¹⁶

¹⁶ I am grateful to Robert Pippin for comments on an early draft of this essay, and for his generosity as an interlocutor over many years. I am also grateful for discussions on themes in the essay to Doug Moggach, Joe Saunders, and John Skorupski and for suggestions on the final draft to Rachel Zuckert.

6 The Form of Self-Consciousness

Terry Pinkard

We might ask: What did Hegel think about acting for a reason or on a reason? One answer might be: Well, he did not actually think much about it, since that is a late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century obsession, and it is wrong to put contemporary words and concerns into the mouths of those who lived long before they were concerns. That is a perfectly fair answer, especially since philosophers have always been adept at ignoring it and putting ideas into the heads of past philosophers who never had them. However, if, as Wilfrid Sellars has suggested, the history of philosophy is the *lingua franca* of philosophers (Sellars 1992, p. 1), it is also not entirely unfair to ask of some past interlocutor if she would try to phrase her views not, as it were, in her native language, nor in ours, but in one that we share.

Robert Pippin has provided an illuminating overview of Hegel's practical philosophy by attending to Hegel's native language while also showing that it provides (when put into the *lingua franca*) a novel approach to the philosophy of action. Along the way, he shows how Hegel picks up on key themes that were later, and completely independently of Hegel, developed by Elizabeth Anscombe.¹ To do that, he has had to translate Hegel not just into contemporary English but also into the idiom of a tradition that began its life with the conviction that whatever else it was, it was not Hegel. From different standpoints, Michael Quante and Christopher Yeomans have also provided insightful and rigorous treatises on Hegel's philosophy of action and how it affects his system of practical philosophy (Quante 2004; Yeomans 2011). Is there anything new to say?

Many passages make it difficult to square Hegel's theory with common classifications in our contemporary terms (which, on reflection, should not be surprising). For example, he gives us material to think of him as a kind of belief/desire theorist, when he says, "laws and principles have no immediate life or validity in themselves. The activity which puts them into operation and endows them with real existence has its source in the needs,

¹ See Pippin 2008a.

impulses, inclinations, and passions of man.”² Hegel might be taken here to be identifying reasons for action with combinations of beliefs and desires (not just beliefs). It can also sound as if Hegel must be therefore endorsing a certain “causalist” position in the philosophy of action, namely, that what causes an action is a psychological state of some sort (“needs, impulses, inclinations and passions”) combined with a set of beliefs (“laws and principles”). (Hegel would then more or less be Donald Davidson *avant la lettre*).³ However, in other passages, Hegel explicitly denies that the relation of motive and action is, from one way of looking at it, causal.⁴ He also states more than once that the will is a form of thought that makes itself practical (which does not of itself rule out a conception of “thinking” as psychological and therefore the causal element in play).⁵ But in many places, he seems to agree with those who claim that reasons for action are not psychological states but rather facts or states of affairs that can be taken up in psychological states.

If Hegel’s theory is to be successful, then, it must satisfy several different considerations: It must first give an account of what kind of reason, if any, would explain an action’s occurrence, that is, explain why the agent did this action and not something else; second, show what kind of reason, if any, would make the action intelligible as “this action performed for this reason” and even perhaps justify it; third, show what it means for an action to be “mine” and not just something happening in that part of space-time in which I find myself; fourth, show what the link is between acting and the act that results (in his terms, *Handlung* and *Tat*, action and deed). Hegel also claims (fifth) that the first three considerations are to be comprehended in terms of the “form of self-consciousness.”⁶ The truly unified account of action must aim at all five targets, in brief: (1) explanation, (2) intelligibility, (3) self-appropriation, (4) acting/deed distinction, and (5) the form of self-consciousness.⁷

The last, the form of self-consciousness, raises the bar the highest for Hegel’s theory. It may suggest that Hegel is claiming to generate determinate content (reasons for action) out of some formal feature of action. As is well known, Kant’s open letter to Fichte accused Fichte of similarly

² VPG 70/Hegel 1994:81. Hegel also notes there that we must include the general concept of what “interests” the agent in his world, what pulls him as the person he specifically is into that particular concatenation of passions and principles.

³ See Quante 2004.

⁴ Hegel, PP §15, 4:222. See Pippin 2008a for a sustained anti-causalist interpretation.

⁵ For example, PR §4: “The will is a particular way of thinking – thinking translating itself in existence, thinking as the drive to give itself existence.”

⁶ See PhG §804, 3:588.

⁷ See Wiland 2012 on the issues to be explored in both action theory and in theories of what it is to act on a reason.

trying to derive content from the forms of logic and made it clear that this was a doomed enterprise. Is Hegel subject to this criticism?

I suggest that Hegel does not, indeed, propose to engage in that doomed enterprise. His reference to the form of self-consciousness refers, rather, to the way in which, inspired by Kantian insights, he modifies and reinterprets an Aristotelian conception of human action according to reasons. Like Aristotle (and current neo-Aristotelian views), he holds that reasons for action are states of affairs that hold for the human agent, and often move the agent to action. Like Kant, however, he takes it that such reasons, if they are to ground rational action in a full sense, must also speak to the agent's conception of herself, her "interest," or, ultimately, her overarching concept of what sort of life she aims to live. Aristotelian *eudaimonia* understood as a mere concept of "species-life" is, then, insufficient for fully rational action, a fully human, self-conscious life. As I suggest briefly in conclusion, however, this combined Kantian-Aristotelian account is itself not sufficient to account for fully rational action on Hegel's view: The subject's interests and broader self-conception must themselves be justified, and this can happen only through the workings of practical reason in history.

Phenomenal and Noumenal Conceptions of Life and Action

Actions are events in the world, and thus they must admit of causal explanations. Actions are, however, also meaningful events and thus must be subject to non-causal, "semantic" (in the broad sense) explanations. Given those two characterizations and their seeming incompatibility, it is not surprising that much written on action attempts to show that one or the other of them is the preferred way of looking at things. In a philosophical world characterized by taste for naturalist landscapes, the temptation is to say that actions simply are events, perhaps differentiated from other events by being caused by special states of mind (combinations of beliefs with desires). Those resistant to naturalist landscapes, on the other hand, will see actions as expressions of thoughts and thus not subject to causal explanation at all.⁸ (The names usually attached nowadays to those broad lines of thought are Donald Davidson and Elizabeth Anscombe; see Anscombe 2000; Davidson 2003.)

Both sides agree that what animates the action is the agent's understanding of what she is doing, and the difference between them to some

⁸ This is Pippin's explicit thesis in Pippin 2008a, although he has modified his view since then. See Pippin 2010.

extent lies in whether we take this understanding to cause the action or whether we take the action to express it. There is less wide but still deep agreement that what the action expresses is the reason behind it, and thus it should also not be surprising that some want to take it both ways and say that the reasons that explain the action are also the reasons that justify it (are the reasons the action expresses).⁹

One of Hegel's main claims is roughly that in all interesting philosophical cases, we necessarily find ourselves torn between competing conceptions of something significant, where the competition between opposing ways of characterizing the issue seems to lie in the very nature of the concept itself (here, that of acting on a reason). In all cases where, in particular, there are conceptual issues of mind and world, we will find such dialectical tension.

This tension arises from what, slightly departing from Hegel, we might call the difference between a phenomenal conception of mind and world (or subject and object) and a noumenal comprehension of mind and world (or subject and object). For reasons laid out in the *Logic*, Hegel preferred different terms. He contrasted the phenomenal (*erscheinende*, "appearing") world not with the noumenal realm but with "the concept" (*der Begriff*). It is a minor interpretive issue, but I am taking it that Hegel accepted what Kant had identified as the noumenal, the world grasped in pure thought, but jettisoned Kant's claim that it was unknowable.

From the phenomenal viewpoint, it seems that only psychological states could be the cause of actions. (What else could be the cause?) On the other hand, from the noumenal viewpoint, it seems that only concepts (reasons) could be the kind of things that have the right relation to the action (and agent), to motivate and rationalize the action to the agent. If there is indeed a dualism of viewpoints – lying close to the distinction between the space of reasons and the space of causes – then to solve the problem Hegel has to show that there is a unity to this dualism and that the dualism is either overcome or at least held in its place so that it ceases to be a threat to rational intelligibility.

From the noumenal viewpoint, an action is to be regarded as an unfolding event, something in progress that has a point (a purpose, an end), and whose components are other actions that are either means to the general end or component phases of the action.¹⁰ On this view, action is an event that is fundamentally teleological and in its paradigm cases

⁹ See Smith 1995, who claims that the two types of reason cannot be folded into each other, but each plays a different role in a naturalistic explanation of what it is to act for a reason.

¹⁰ On the conception of action from the noumenal standpoint, where "noumenal" is not taken to be identical to an unknowable things-in-itself, see Forst 2015.

temporal.¹¹ Moreover, it seems to be something that the agent must know that she is doing. She must know her reason and the connection of that reason to the action she is undertaking. Without such knowledge, the action is not an action, but only a non-action event. The event as an action must include the form of self-consciousness.

There is an obvious objection to this way of putting it. One does many things without knowing one is doing them, if for no other reason than that there are many ways to fail at what one was doing. The academic takes himself to be offering the knockout argument, but he just shows he did not understand the original statement. The chef takes himself to be making a certain dish, but it turns out different. The examples easily multiply.

Nonetheless, in each case, the agent knew herself to be doing something that was a part or phase of the action at which she aimed. (The chef knows he is cooking, not playing in a basketball game, etc.) These examples do not show that we do not know what we are doing, but only that there is a difference between acting and a successful action or between acting and deeds. Actions can fail for many reasons: One changes one's mind, one is prevented from acting, one is injured, worldly conditions shift as the action is underway, or one simply fails to complete the action. It is a banal truth that although the agent may know what she is doing, nobody knows if she will succeed. Likewise, the agent can correct her course of action while the action is underway so as to make success more likely precisely because she knows what she is doing. Pippin – the most vigorous exponent of understanding the Hegelian conception of action as “teleologically unfolding event” – has argued that Hegel's distinction between *Handlung* and *Tat* – action and deed – makes just that point about acting and act.

Part of what pulls us to the phenomenal view of action, on the other hand, is the idea that what motivates us has to be part of our animal nature, and that our rational faculties at best can, as Hume argued, steer such animal motives but remain dependent on them for any power they might have. On that view, reasons cannot explain on their own why an action occurs. As noted, Hegel might seem to endorse some version of this view when he says that what gives principles their force and validity “has its source in the needs, impulses, inclinations, and passions of man.”¹²

Yet he also would endorse the view that the link between them cannot be arbitrary (or “external” as he would put it). The reasons an agent has

¹¹ For versions of this view, see Frankfurt 1988, Thompson 2008, and Yeomans 2011. Pippin (in 2008a) seems to think that Hegel and Anscombe share the same view about actions and reasons, and that Hegel first and maybe only parts company with Anscombe in his understanding of temporality.

¹² VPG 70/Hegel 1994:81.

for action must make the action intelligible. That is where the problems begin; one could characterize this as a Kantian objection to Hume. An obvious use of “reason for action” explains why the actor did what he did: “The dean abolished the Humanities Departments because they did not bring in enough research grants.” Yet, on the noumenal view of reasons, the dean’s reason for action was no reason at all: A “reason” here refers to the evaluative notion of what makes a good reason. The dean’s reason (why he did what he did) was not a good reason (What was the dean thinking?).

The issue about practical reason for Hegel, especially in the wake of Kant, is thus: What is the relation between the noumenal world (comprehended by thought) and the phenomenal world of experience?

Reasons for the Species

What do desires, drives, and inclinations have to do with willing and acting? Some seem to sweep over the agent: Why am I going to bed now? – I’m sleepy; I can barely keep my eyes open, etc. Why are you eating dinner so late? – Lots of work but now I’m famished. This suggests a familiar picture of the relation of reason to the senses that Hegel rejected and that has become again a topic of interest. For the psychological view of reasons – the view that identifies reasons for action with states of mind – a desire linked with a belief (itself taken as a mental state) can be a reason that explains the action in the sense that it causes it: I did it because I both wanted to and believed that would be a way to do it.

Against this view, Hegel proposes a radicalization of Kant’s “incorporation thesis”:¹³ No desire can be a motive for me – can satisfy both the demand for explanation and for intelligibility – unless I incorporate it into my maxim. Desires become reasons when they are taken up by the agent and made into genuine reasons for action.¹⁴ If they are not so taken up, then they are merely causes at best and not reasons (in the sense of furnishing intelligibility) at all. Desires, to be part of genuine actions, must have the form of self-consciousness.

Hegel argues so not only on the noumenal (evaluative, justificatory) grounds just mentioned but also because conceptions of reasons as causes, or as appropriated into a psychological state (such as a belief/

¹³ Allison 1990.

¹⁴ See, for example: “Freedom of the will is of a wholly unique nature in that an incentive can determine the will to an action only insofar as the individual has incorporated it into his maxim (has made it into the general rule in accordance with which he will conduct himself); only thus can an incentive, whatever it may be, co-exist with the absolute spontaneity of the will (i.e., freedom)” (Kant 1960, 6:23–4).

desire) that causes the action, make it difficult (or, rather, impossible) to show how it is the agent himself who is acting. On the causal model, the agent starts the process by desiring and believing such and such, which sets his body in motion; the agent is left more or less just observing how the world unfolds from there.¹⁵ What is “mine” in the action is what comes about after I have, as it were, pulled the lever and set the process in motion. That picture makes the agent look a bit like a viewer at the race once the lever has been pulled: The horses are out of the gate, and what will happen now?

On this view, action will be little different from cases wherein my reasons are imposed on me from without, for example, coercion, discovered manipulation, or weakness of will (where desires lead the agent to do something that he does not endorse, so that the desire remains external to the agent). In such cases, the agency of the agent himself is lost. To say that one’s actions were caused by desires (combined with beliefs) thus cannot satisfy the target of self-appropriation. By contrast, in a successful action – understood as a teleologically unfolding event – I can see the reasons as my reasons and not as reasons imposed on me from without.

Yet from the phenomenal point of view, some drives, desires, inclinations press on us with obvious urgency (sleep, hunger, and other familiar urges) and press on us *as* reasons. All versions of the incorporation viewpoint must claim, however, that those desires have no hold on us as reasons until they are made into reasons. This is part of a familiar Kantian picture of our “synthesizing” intuitions into consciousness and imposing the restraints of practical reason on our practical sensibilities. Sensibility is on one side, and reason is on the other. Reason must incorporate sensibility into itself or go deeply into sensibility and make it its own.

Hegel’s twist on this lies in his modified Aristotelian naturalism. This conception involves two features of importance for a conception of practical reasons. First, it involves Hegel’s conception of nature as nature shows up for the natural sciences. Life in nature is to be seen as fully natural, at least in the sense that it is not guided by any supernatural force. According to Hegel’s neo-Aristotelian conception of organic life, moreover, organic life as such has ways in which things can go well or badly for the organism – the stone cannot become ill, as Hegel puts it; thus, there is a scattered kind of purposiveness in nature even if nature as a whole is devoid of purpose.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Yeomans 2011; Wiland 2012. ¹⁶ See Pinkard 2012.

This Hegelian conception of nature has analogs in recent discussions by Philippa Foot and Michael Thompson.¹⁷ Thompson has argued that to characterize something as a process of life, we must have some idea of where it is progressing in terms of the life-form it is. If we simply look at the various events of a life-form one after another, as when the food goes in the mouth, the animal chews, and the animal swallows, we will not be able to characterize it as, for example, nutrition – unless we have some view of what the process is about.¹⁸ This is not to say that there is any kind of backward causation going on but rather that any true characterization of an organic process must make reference to its life-form and thus to the life cycle of the species.¹⁹ In that view, there are natural goods with respect to species that define what it is for things to go well for them as the species they are. Judgments about organic life in turn see the individual in terms of whether it instantiates the species concept better or worse. Nature comprehended in thought – noumenal nature – involves living beings acting according to purposes inherent to their species.

Hegel takes this to mean that there are reasons in nature.²⁰ They are states of affairs – *Sachen*, in his German – not just psychological states of certain organisms. Organisms may in fact have reasons even though they themselves cannot reason, or (in the case of plants) entirely lack psychological states. The plant has a reason to send a shoot in a certain direction so as to get more sun. It cannot be said to be acting, however, in responding to that reason.

With animals, the case is different. The world shows up for the animal in certain ways given its nature. The rabbit, sensing a fox closing in, has a reason to run, even though the rabbit cannot explicitly reason about that. The fox in turn has a reason to go after the rabbit, even though the fox cannot reason about it. Each can carry out its action more or less intelligently, alter its behavior accordingly, and form at least analogs to

¹⁷ See Foot 2001; Thompson 2008.

¹⁸ See Thompson 2013, p. 719: “Consider . . . cell division or ‘mitosis’[:] its core is the process of replication of genetic material. Now, where we come upon this process in bacteria and suchlike organisms – in which of course it first appeared, thus triggering the crush of terrestrial evolutionary history – in suchlike creatures, we will have come upon the process of reproduction, the coming-to-be of new bacteria from old, Aristotle’s *genesis*. But the same process is a part of growth and self-maintenance in a California condor or in a human being, Aristotle’s *threpsis*. Thus what phenomena constitute reproduction, and what phenomena are constituted by mitosis, in turn depends on the life form in question. According to context, the same can constitute something different, and something quite different can constitute the same.”

¹⁹ See, for example, Foot 2001, p. 31.

²⁰ See Kreines 2008, Kreines 2006, and Pinkard 2012.

beliefs. For example, the dog seeking the squirrel may bark at one tree, realize that the squirrel has moved, and act accordingly (by barking up a different tree).²¹ Likewise, the dog barking at what it takes to be an intruder can suddenly switch to happy tail wagging when it sees that the figure is its owner. The dog cannot reason about such matters; although it may have something like beliefs, it does not have the concept of belief; although it may work in terms of truth and falsity – as when it notices that the squirrel is no longer in the tree – it does not possess those concepts or at least does not possess them fully.

In this sense, Hegel says, the animal has purposes but does not have them *as* purposes.²² Its purposes cannot be reflectively taken up by the animal and weighed as evidence or used in inference. The animal's reasons may show up for it in determinate ways and call for determinate responses, such as when the fox sees the rabbit and goes for it, or the rabbit runs left, dives into a burrow, and so on.

However, reasons for animals can also remain indeterminate, since they do not have the linguistic and reflective means for making them more determinate. Thus, the animal, when presented with a reason for action (chase the rabbit, escape the fox) has a way in which members of its species typically act, but, in Hegel's words, "it has no will and must obey its drive if nothing external prevents it" (i.e., if no other drive or move made by its native intelligence interferes with the behavior called for by the reason at hand).²³ Its nature sets the way it typically behaves, and something either must interfere with that nature to change the typical response, or, if nothing interferes and the response is not forthcoming, then the creature, and not just our concept of the creature, is defective. ("The defect in a chair which has only three legs is in us; but in life, the defect is in life itself."²⁴)

A reason for action is thus the significance that something has for a certain creature given its possibilities. With self-conscious creatures, that significance goes beyond possibilities of self-maintenance and reproduction, to include matters such as possible deities, constitutional governments, alternative ways of life, moral obligations, and so forth. Or, as we might put it, what shows up as salient for an animal are the reasons and their context, and thus for rational animals, a host of new things will show up as salient for them.

The desires and drives of humans can thus get their grip on the more developed conceptuality of self-conscious subjects not because they are non-conceptual natural events that must be "synthesized" into maxims,

²¹ The example is adapted from that found in MacIntyre 1999. ²² EN §360.

²³ PR §11. ²⁴ EN §359Z.

but because they already show up as meaningful animal desires. Desires can become incorporated into the will of a self-conscious agent as motives because they are already meaningful as incentives for a living being, that is, as putative reasons.

Reasons and Perspectives

Since, on Hegel's view, practical reasons are the significance that things have for a self-conscious creature given its possibilities (as they are for all animals), the practical perspective of the self-conscious agent is crucial to comprehending what is a reason for the agent. Although reasons may be facts (the glowing burner on the stove gives me a reason not to touch it, and even another agent's wants and desires can be a fact that is a reason),²⁵ without the practical perspective of the agent, those facts – the *Sachen* – get no hold on us.

What guides the agent is what Hegel calls his “interest,” his own perspective on what he is called to do, as part of a larger conception of how to lead his life. The agent acts in light of its concept of what it is doing, of what matters; assessing an action of another agent involves seeing the action from the vantage of, speaking loosely, the concept in light of which she is acting. Nonetheless, it is not simply to our own psychological states that we are sensitive when we respond to such reasons. We are responding to them as the facts or states of affairs they are that are providing us with those reasons, even though our response to them has to do with our psychological states (our “interest”).²⁶

If the agent is to act according to reasons in both the phenomenal sense and the noumenal sense – to the (phenomenal) reasons that it resolves on in any action and to the reason that counts for it as a good (noumenal) reason – it needs some way of ordering these reasons by reason itself. The form of self-consciousness requires a content that conforms to – is *gemäß*, in Hegel's German – its concept. Hegel thought that only something like virtue on the Aristotelian conception would work as such a measure: a kind of know-how, not general principles or ends supposedly

²⁵ See *ibid.*, §7: “But here we already possess freedom in the form of feeling, for example in friendship and love. Here, we are not one-sidedly within ourselves, but willingly limit ourselves with reference to an other, even while knowing ourselves in this limitation as ourselves.”

²⁶ “If I put something into practice, I must have an interest in doing so. I must be personally involved in it and hope to attain some satisfaction through its accomplishment. My own interest must be at stake. It must be my end. Nothing can happen unless the individuals concerned can also gain satisfaction for themselves as particular individuals” (VPG 70/ Hegel 1994:82).

inherent in the bare concept of action.²⁷ The subject resolves the indeterminacy found in the form of self-consciousness and the multifarious reasons that show up for a living creature by appealing to a conception of how to live.

Self-conscious rational agency in fact has, on Hegel's view, a double indeterminacy. First, the more determinate reasons the agent has by virtue of his animal nature can conflict. Since they have no measure within themselves as to their comparative weight, they thus remain indeterminate as a whole.²⁸ Second, no determinate reason is built into the very concept of agency per se (*an sich*, as Hegel puts it), as I now discuss in more detail.

The Hegelian subject is a "thinking substance," the way in which substance becomes subject, that is, a material creature who possesses the capacity for a kind of self-relation that is otherwise not found in nature.²⁹ In Hegel's appropriation of the Kantian conception of the unity of self-consciousness, we cannot be said to be doing certain things – judging, acting, and so on – without the thought of what we were doing,

²⁷ VGP 19:223: "Der Trieb, die Neigung ist das Treibende, Besondere, in Rücksicht auf das Praktische näher im Subjekt auf die Verwirklichung Gehende; das Subjekt ist in seiner Tätigkeit besonders, und es ist notwendig, daß es darin identisch sei mit dem Allgemeinen. Diese Einheit, worin das Vernünftige das Herrschende ist, ist die Tugend; dies ist die richtige Bestimmung." (In my translation: "The impulse, the inclination is what is impelling, the particular, with regard to the practical, more precisely it is in the subject approaching its actualization; the subject is particularized in its activity, and it is necessary that it be therein identical with the universal. This unity, within which the rational is dominant, is virtue; this is the correct determination.") Hegel accepts Kant's criticism of Aristotle (see Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, 5:404) but claims that although Kant has correctly shown that the concept of duty cannot be an Aristotelian mean, this does not mean that the Aristotelian mean, or virtue, is incorrect. Rather, a modern conception must somehow incorporate both.

²⁸ Hegel registers this in different places, especially in the PR Introduction. Because drives and desires may be reasons on their own in terms of the content of each drive, but as standing in potential conflict with one another and possessing no "measure" or "yardstick" in themselves, they have an irrational form. To give them a rational form, the capacity for self-conscious reflection is required. In PR §5, he notes: "The will contains (a) the element of pure indeterminacy or of the I's pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content, whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires, and drives, or given and determined in some other way, is dissolved; this is the limitless infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thinking of oneself." In §11, he notes, on the other side, that "these are the *drives*, *desires*, and *inclinations* by which the will finds itself naturally determined. This content, along with the determinations developed within it, does indeed originate in the will's rationality and it is thus rational in itself but expressed in so immediate a form, it does not yet have the form of rationality." In §12, he notes the indeterminacy both of the abstracted concept of the agent and of the system of desires and drives themselves (as offering conflicting reasons). In §14 and §15, he stresses the double indeterminacy of agency.

²⁹ PhG §17, my translation.

and that this thought need not consist in a separate, reflective act (as if in preparing the meal, the chef had to keep telling himself second by second that he was cooking and not, say, skydiving).

This kind of self-relation gives the human agent a kind of status that the merely intelligent animal cannot have: She becomes a self-constituting animal, since to be something like a knower is to know what one is doing when one is making judgments. The agent as conceived noumenally is the same agent conceived phenomenally. She is the phenomenal creature who by embodying this kind of self-relation constitutes herself as a noumenal creature. There is no need to separate the agent into two spheres, one sphere of which is causally efficacious (the phenomenal) with the other operating in the space of reasons. The phenomenal agent becomes the noumenal agent in taking up a self-conscious relation to the world. The noumenal agent is the phenomenal agent relating to herself in a self-conscious way and not simply acting in lights of purposes. With that, there is also no reason to think the noumenal realm to be populated by unknowable things-in-themselves.

Such a conception proposes that there is a measure internal to practical reason, a measure not of a self-conscious rational being (which might also be that of a god), but of a human being. The appropriate yardstick, to use Hegel's terminology, would be that of the unity of the formal and the material (*inhaltlich*), or that of the universal and the particular.³⁰

Self-conscious life is, as Hegel puts it, the genus aware of itself as the genus it is.³¹ The awareness of a life in terms of a conception of the life it is leading means that the concept of what is good for the species as species – as one might understand Aristotelian eudaimonia to be – cannot on its own provide the full “yardstick” or “measure” for competing goods within such a life.

Hegel's more general argument here is to the effect that practical reason itself pushes us beyond the good of the species taken simply as life toward the idea of making ourselves conforming to our concept. Within a purely species conception of life, even of a human life, an agent will confront many competing goods; a self-conscious agent, if rational, will have to choose among them for some other reason.

³⁰ PR §17.

³¹ See PhG §172 and §173 (in my translation): “It is the *simple genus*, which in the movement of life itself does not *exist for itself as this ‘simple.’* Rather, in this *result*, life points towards something other than itself, namely, towards consciousness, for which life exists as this unity, that is, as genus . . . But this other life for which the *genus* as such exists and which is the genus for itself, namely, *self-consciousness*, initially exists in its own eyes merely as this simple essence and, in its own eyes, is an object as the *pure I*.”

For Hegel, “the aim of philosophical inquiry is to eliminate the contingent.”³² In practical terms, we aim to find what is necessary for humans to measure up to their self-concept, of who they are as mothers, fathers, politicians, clerks, military personnel, friends, and so on. We seek not only that without which human action could not be action but what it takes to be a fully successful actor.

The knowledge of what it is to lead a human life is manifested, as Hegel puts it, in various actions.³³ And that re-raises the question of whether such a standard is internal to the concept of human life (strictly, for Hegel, not just the concept but the “Idea” as the unity of concept and objectivity).³⁴ If a reason for something lies in the significance that it has for a being given its possibilities, then reasons for action lie in the possibilities open to human agents, including the drives, desires, and inclinations of those agents. The indeterminacy that is the residue of the isolated concept of a self-conscious subject and the particular set of drives, desires, and inclinations typical of those agents falls into a more determinate shape when both are regarded as functioning within an unfolding human life. Unlike a Kantian conception that seeks to subject the drives and desires to practical reason, this conception seeks to determine the role these drives and desires play in leading a human life, according to whatever standard of goodness might emerge from the conception of an embodied self-conscious rational agent.³⁵

Hegel, of course, has a striking and strong thesis about the nature of such a conception. A good part of it depends on what kinds of reasons are sustainable in the collective process of giving and asking for reasons (the practices of which involve more than argumentative reason giving but also

³² VPG 28/Hegel 1994:29.

³³ EN §383: “Diese Allgemeinheit ist auch sein Dasein. Als für sich seiend ist das Allgemeine sich besondernd und hierin Identität mit sich. Die Bestimmtheit des Geistes ist daher die Manifestation. Er ist nicht irgendeine Bestimmtheit oder Inhalt, dessen Äußerung oder Äußerlichkeit nur davon unterschiedene Form wäre; so daß er nicht etwas offenbart, sondern seine Bestimmtheit und Inhalt ist dieses Offenbaren selbst. Seine Möglichkeit ist daher unmittelbar unendliche, absolute Wirklichkeit.” (In my translation: “This universality is also its existence. As existing for itself, the universal particularizes itself and is there in identity with itself. The determinateness of spirit is consequently that of manifestation. Spirit is not just any old determinateness or content whose expression or externality would be that of a form different from its expression – so that the spirit does not reveal something but rather is the determinateness and content of this revealing activity itself.”)

³⁴ EL §213.

³⁵ PR §19: “Underlying the demand for the *purification of the drives* is the general idea that they should be freed from the *form* of their immediate natural determinacy and from the subjectivity and contingency of their *content*, and restored to their substantial essence. The truth behind this indeterminate demand is that the drives should become the rational system of the will’s determination; to grasp them thus in terms of the concept is the content of the science of right.”

those of art and philosophy). For, on his view, reasons for opting for one reason over another always occur in the context of reasons offered to others and thus contain a dynamic within themselves to push toward those reasons as being justifiable to others. As the practices that sustain certain patterns of giving and asking for reasons break down because it becomes clear that they are not achieving and cannot achieve the ends that would justify them, they give way to new patterns of giving and asking for reasons. For example, on Hegel's account (again, schematically put), eudaimonia worked as such a conception or a yardstick only to the extent that it was widely shared as a reason in the kind of collective enterprise that constituted the ancient Greek polis. However, that enterprise also rested on the institution of slavery – nothing in the sense of eudaimonia ensures that one can flourish only if others cannot, and within the boundaries of ancient Greek life, it actually required that some not flourish so that others could. It is of course a much longer story, but Hegel's account of the historical development of such yardsticks is that of collective projects developing a sense – primarily although not exclusively through their art, religion, and philosophy – that what they are doing is deeply irrational in that they cannot secure the goods they seek in the ways they have been required to seek them.

This dynamic of practical reason is what pushes itself to a more unified account of such yardsticks. There is no unity to practical reason at the outset. There may in principle be competing goods at life. But as it were, as the clashes inherent in such goods as embodied in concrete lives become more apparent, and as it becomes more apparent that the clashes are both destructive and unavoidable, it becomes more of a project itself to give a unified account of practical, self-conscious life. Both the historicist elements and Hegel's own conception of what it means to become better practical reasoners are at odds with a purely "species life" conception. As the irrationalities of a failing way of life make themselves felt, agents move beyond merely conceiving of themselves as responding to reasons and develop conceptions of what reasons they are authorized to take up in action. Such authorization, which has its origins in the irrationality of the master-slave relationship, has turned out, so Hegel's longer argument goes, to be social in character and not to rest on some transcendent authorization from afar – or *jenseits*, as he calls it in German – bestowing it on us. As we come to understand the way in which there are better and worse ways of responding to reasons and reciprocally authorizing each other to respond to certain reasons and even to construct them, the noumenal world – of subjects reciprocally authorizing each other in both general and also very determinate ways – plays its role in building up the phenomenal world of psychological states, settled dispositions, and habits. Making a full

argument for this claim requires Hegel, among other things, to tell a story about how we are getting better at asking for the reasons that govern a successful life carried out in such social contexts, and that story is fundamentally, deeply historical. The story of that story is itself a story for another time.³⁶

³⁶ I have attempted to show how that story of struggles for recognition and the “infinite end” of justice works out in Pinkard 2017.

7 Hegel on Objects as Subjects

Rolf-Peter Horstmann

In a well-known Berlin aphorism, Hegel notes that a great man condemns people to explicate him (see Hegel 1968–, 22: 476).¹ However, before we can explicate we must understand. Hence Gadamer, in applying this aphorism to Hegel himself, is said to suggest very sensibly that to understand we first of all have to learn to spell out Hegel (*Hegel buchstabieren lernen*). The following remarks are but one of many other and presumably just as feeble attempts to follow Gadamer's suggestion. They circle around two familiar though somewhat elusive statements from the Preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In these statements, we are told (1) that the Truth is the Whole and (2) that the Truth is not just substance, but also subject. The comments offered here aim not primarily to defend or to criticize any particular claim one can ascribe to Hegel in connection with these statements, but rather to outline what I take to be Hegel's fundamental philosophical perspective and assumptions that give rise to these statements. This outline is divided into six sections. The first (I) indicates an asymmetry between the reception of Kant's and Hegel's philosophies and ponders possible reasons and consequences for it.

Robert Pippin very convincingly states in a recent article: "Throughout his life Hegel characterized his own position by partly invoking and appropriating, and partly criticizing, what he took to be the Kantian understanding of the relation between understanding and sensibility, concept and intuition. All the passages clearly indicate that what Hegel is out to criticize is not the distinction itself, but the way Kant understands the nature of concept-intuition unity in knowledge claims" (Pippin 2015a, 160). The text presented here is intended to back up Pippin's assessment by looking not at Hegel's views concerning the relation of understanding and sensibility, but at aspects of Hegel's theory of object constitution as a theory that is guided by an attempt both to appropriate and to criticize Kantian convictions. Because of constraints as to the length of this article, there are no footnotes attached though I am fully aware that many of the points addressed here have been discussed, albeit quite often within a different thematic setting, by others much more extensively, most notably in recent years in the English-speaking world by T. Pinkard, J. McDowell, and J. Kreines (not to mention Pippin again). However, to engage with their work explicitly would have meant to sacrifice much of the text.

¹ Citations to Hegel in this essay are to paragraph number (for the *Encyclopedia*) as in the other essays, or to volume and page number of Hegel 1968–, abbreviated as *GW*. Translations are my own.

The second (II) considers why Hegel thinks it necessary to abandon the framework of Kant's theoretical philosophy. The third (III) section specifies Hegel's dissatisfaction with Kant's conception of an object and with Kant's resultant criticism of metaphysics. Section IV sketches Hegel's own conception of an object and the consequent privileged role he assigns to what he calls "concepts."

Section V discusses his theory of the Concept, that is, of what he takes to be the organizing principles of concepts. Finally, section VI hints at Hegel's stance towards metaphysics as implied in his view of objects.

I

If one were to compare the respective fates of Kant's and Hegel's philosophical works during the past two hundred years or so in mainstream academic philosophy, especially in the English-speaking world, one could get the impression that something very curious has happened. Kant's philosophy turned out to be a grandiose success story, whose reception led from humble beginnings to its current recognition as a dominant factor in many areas of philosophical discussion. This modern assessment seems to be based largely on acknowledging and rewarding Kant's commitment to an enlightened and transparent concept of rationality. The value of Hegel's philosophical teachings, on the other hand, has been increasingly cast into doubt in the past two centuries (though important parts of these teachings dominated the intellectual scene at the height of his career, deep into the nineteenth century) owing mainly to the ever-increasing tendency to think of them as documents of a preposterous and misguided attitude towards the most fundamental rules of modern rationality. What makes this situation curious is not the opposed evaluations – these things happen in the history of philosophy, just as in the history of other cultural enterprises all the time. Rather, one might find this situation somewhat odd because of the evidence on which it is based. Kant's philosophy is taken to present a paradigm of a rational approach to whatever subject matter Kant considers despite the manifest fact that his theories pose the most baffling challenges to almost all fundamental convictions a normal person endowed with the usual intellectual and practical skills cannot help but entertain when dealing with her environment both theoretically and practically. In contrast, Hegel's philosophical edifice is charged with exhibiting irrational tendencies despite the fact that the considered results of Hegel's philosophical convictions often conform quite well to the basic outlook on matters theoretical and practical that a normal, or a sophisticated normal, person has anyway.

It is easy to establish the strangeness of this strange state of affairs. One just has to look at Kant's conceptions of an object of cognition, of freedom, and of teleology, that is, at central conceptions of each of his three *Critiques*, and to compare them with Hegel's view on the same topics. Let us start with Kant's conception of an object of cognition in the first *Critique*. As is well known, according to Kant when one claims to know that something of which one is immediately aware is an object, one is not stating a fact about this object in itself as it might be independently but only about its appearance, that is, about the way one represents this object. For the spatio-temporal framework within which a person perceives an object itself has nothing to do with the object perceived but is provided by the constitution of the sensory apparatus of the cognizing subject. Not only are spatio-temporal characteristics of objects made available solely by the subject but also the subject alone provides the conceptual elements that are constitutive of what is taken to be an object. An object that can be known, therefore, must be conceived of as the creation of the intellectual powers of a cognizing subject. Because of all these subjective ingredients, objects that can be known are, according to Kant, merely appearances that might have some unknowable basis in the noumenal realm of things in themselves. On Kant's view, then, the world one relates to, when judging that something is so, is populated with objects that in the end are phenomena whose way of being depends on the very subject that relates to them. This somewhat strange picture of the objects a normal person is dealing with in normal circumstances already irritated (some of) Kant's contemporaries, as in Jacobi's polemical characterization of Kant's position as a "speculative egoism" (Jacobi 1968, 2:310).

Kant's position concerning the reality of freedom in the second *Critique* is similar. Here too his conception seems difficult to reconcile with what real freedom means to a person who thinks of herself as free to act one way or another. For Kant, freedom is not real in the "normal" objective sense according to which something is real if it can be shown to conform to the general conditions of experience. Instead he grants freedom the status of what he calls "practical reality," thereby attributing to freedom a non-cognitive significance that has a positive foundational function, and thus has to be taken as real, only in practical and moral contexts. Freedom has nothing to do with the world a subject experiences; it is a noumenal characteristic of a person pertaining to her existence as a member of an intelligible world.

And when it comes to the question as to whether nature as a whole and at least some of its products are organized teleologically, Kant again, in his third *Critique*, seems to deny obvious facts a normal person cannot help

but acknowledge. According to Kant, somewhat paradoxically, our epistemic situation is such that, though we cannot avoid thinking of nature and some of its products (living beings) as purposefully organized, that is, as constituted according to ends, we nevertheless have no right to rely on ends in explanations of phenomena that lay claim to objective validity. Instead, Kant wants us to accept that teleological explanations, that is, explanations that employ concepts of ends, have only subjective validity: they cannot give insight into the real constitution of an object and thus can at best be seen as helpful hypotheses. The normal person, especially the enlightened normal person, is thus asked to accept that natural products such as plants and animals, among them human beings, cannot be seen as being purposeful realizations of real ends in nature but have to be viewed as complicated machines whose mechanisms we just do not know yet.

With respect to Hegel, things are very different. He has not the slightest sympathy with Kant's (in his eyes rather bizarre) worldview, which flies in the face of facts obvious to every sane person. Thus he takes it to be ludicrous to think of the objects that we experience (perceive, act upon) in our normal dealings, in both the physical and the social-cultural world, as having the ontological status of subjective creations of human minds and as being in the end nothing but amazing results of the somewhat miraculous interplay of some cognitive faculties a human being happens to be endowed with (see *GW* 4:329ff.). Instead he is committed to the view that the normal person is absolutely right to insist based on experience on the subject-independent existence of spatio-temporal physical objects as well as the objective reality of social and cultural phenomena such as political institutions, historical developments, and religions.

With respect to freedom, Hegel is deeply distrustful of both Kant's intention to restrict legitimate talk about freedom to moral contexts and his invention of a special kind of reality – practical reality – to reconcile the idea of freedom with the demands of natural necessity (see *EL* §60). Against Kant and in conformity with what is well founded in everyone's personal experience, Hegel is convinced that freedom in the unequivocal sense of autonomous self-determination directed at the realization of an end is a real feature of every phenomenon subject to developmental processes, whether it is a natural or a social-cultural object, and whether it is an individual or a cluster or an organized whole (though there might be object-specific constraints on how an object can realize its freedom).

Concerning teleology, Hegel defends an attitude that from an experiential point of view he takes to be much more plausible than Kant's concerning the objective reality of ends in nature (see *GW* 4:341f.). For him the very fact that there are living beings around, whose constitution

can only be viewed as grounded in the organized realization of internal ends, makes it absurd to deny the subject-independent reality of ends, and Kant's move to account for ends as only subjective tools of explanation by bringing them into connection with considerations from his practical philosophy seems to Hegel just another indicator of his patently one-sided conception of reality.

So, why is it that Kant's views have gained much more acceptance and influence over the course of time in many areas of academic philosophical discourse than Hegel's views ever achieved? It is not likely that this acceptance is due to the patent extravagance of (some of) Kant's substantive claims. Rather, the greater acceptance and appreciation of Kant by comparison to Hegel seems to have to do not so much with a stance for or against substantive claims, but with the means by which the philosophers arrive at their respective claims or their standards of rational discourse. Whereas Kant is credited with trying to reach his explanatory goals by playing by the rules of rational discourse, that is, by relying on generally accepted and well-founded norms of logic and argument, Hegel is suspected of not obeying the rules. He is suspected of playing by different rules that are themselves nothing but unfounded and arbitrary inventions that are meant to give the appearance of rationality to his defense of whatever he wishes to claim. In a certain sense there seems to be a moral judgment involved in this comparative assessment: Kant's observance of the accepted rules of rationality is believed to be a moral virtue, while Hegel's insistence on different rules somehow gives rise to the uncomfortable impression of attempted cheating and thus of moral failure. A large part of the resistance to Hegel can be traced back to such a moral suspicion.

II

Hegel was well aware of this latent discomfort aroused by his insistence on an alternative set of rules of rationality as necessary for gaining insight into what really is the case, and he argued for that necessity often, and in a number of different ways. He mainly pursues two strategies to make his case. The first focuses on what can be called "formal" elements of rationality and raises doubts as to the sources and presuppositions of our understanding of logical concepts (e.g. identity, negation) and laws (e.g. contradiction, excluded middle) as well as to the well-foundedness and applicability of our methodologies (e.g. *mos geometricus*, transcendental proofs). This strategy consists in pointing out again and again, from his earliest philosophical writings (*Difference between Fichte and Schelling*) to the last (second edition of the first part of the *Science of Logic*) inconsistencies necessarily connected

with what he takes to be the prevailing traditional “formal” modes of thinking. These modes he sees exemplified paradigmatically in Kant’s methodological and logical presuppositions; consequently, his criticism often focuses on Kantian views (see *GW* 21:46 note). The story of his criticism of the traditional framework of rationality has been told often and will not be pursued here.

The second strategy focuses not so much on the formal elements of rationality but on the goal one aims to achieve by employing rational procedures. So Hegel reflects on the overall aim of philosophy, namely to establish a coherent, systematic, and all-encompassing view of reality in all its different aspects, and on what is needed to realize this aim. Here he points to the explanatory success achieved if one gives up traditional modes of thinking and makes use of insights that can be gained only by relying on logical and methodological means that deviate fundamentally from conventional standards of rationality. This success is demonstrated, according to Hegel, by the very fact that only with these alternative means can one carry out what can be rightfully considered to be a system of philosophy.

Both strategies might be considered to be rather ineffective. Concerning the first, one might object that even if one were to share Hegel’s criticism of traditional rational standards, this by no means entails any commitment to Hegel’s alternative. It could well be that the traditional standards of rationality are rotten, but Hegel’s alternative is not much better. Even justified criticism does not override the old (traditional) logical rule *ex falso quodlibet*. One also has to face skeptical questions concerning the second strategy. Explanatory success could be achieved in many different ways; there might be several ways to establish a philosophical system that meets the demands Hegel takes to be essential for such a system. Why should Hegel’s way of realizing such a system be considered the most promising way? After all, as the old proverb says, many roads lead to Rome.

Discussion of whether these strategies are convincing might turn out to be unhelpful for overriding the misgivings as to Hegel’s intellectual trustworthiness. However, a different question must be answered prior to that discussion in any case: namely, what reasons might Hegel have had to challenge the overall framework of (what he took to be) the traditional standards of rationality in the first place. In other words and more specifically concerning the philosophical environment within which Hegel situates himself: what reservations did he have against the Kantian attempt to map out the ways the world has to be by relying on those traditional (for Hegel insufficient), methodological and logical means? Without answering this question, one cannot understand why Hegel embarks on the project to change the standards of rationality in the first

place. For Hegel, the reasons for rejecting a Kantian framework of rationality have their basis in a deep disagreement with Kant's criticism of metaphysics on the basis of his conception of the unity of an object, as I now suggest.

As is well known, Kant proclaims that insofar as it deals with principles that refer to objects in general, that is, insofar as it is ontology (A 845/B 873), metaphysics has to give up its "proud name" and has to be replaced by the "mere analytic of pure understanding" (A 247/B 304). Kant thereby insinuates that for us there is nothing to know about objects considered independently from what he calls "the conditions of sensibility". Why is that so? According to Kant, creatures like us can have knowledge only of (non-mathematical) objects that are the joint products of given (sensible) materials and of conceptual operations we perform on this material or which provide the form for it. Because these conceptual operations are performed by a (human) subject, an object that can be known is ultimately a subjective construction or an appearance. Thus talk about objects and their constitution (nature, essence) is meaningful talk *for us* only if we can trace it back to what we contribute to their creation/construction; any attempt to think of principles of object constitution that are independent of our subjective efforts (conceptual and non-conceptual) is not only misguided but utterly futile. Hence metaphysics as an endeavor that promises to gain insight into what objects are in themselves, independently of the cognizing subject, must be abandoned; what must be pursued instead is the analysis of the operations of the mind that lead to our representations of objects of cognition, that is, an analysis of "the subjective conditions of objectivity" or an "analytic of the pure understanding."

The reasons Kant puts forward to justify this diagnosis are notoriously complex and by no means easy to evaluate. But however one reconstructs these reasons, at some point one will arrive at what Kant calls "the original-synthetic unity of apperception" (B 132). By this term, he refers to an unavoidable condition (on his view) for being able to relate a multitude of disparate representations to one another such that they give rise to the unitary representation of an object or to the unity of an object. Because this condition can be realized only by invoking the identity of self-consciousness and because self-consciousness is conceived of by Kant as a faculty of the *human* mind (A 95), it follows that for him (1) the unity that is constitutive of the representation of an object is based on the identity of self-consciousness (apperception) and (2) what traditional metaphysics/ontology tries to find, namely the most elementary characteristics of an object (in medieval scholasticism, *transcendentalia*, a term to which Kant alludes when talking about *transzendental* and

Transzendentalphilosophie; see B 113f.) cannot be found by speculating about the natures/essences of objects but has to be analysed in terms of the achievements of the self-conscious mind of human subjects.

III

Whether the preceding discussion adequately characterizes Kant's claims concerning metaphysics and his verdict concerning how to overcome its deficiencies might be controversial. Hegel, at least, seems to have read Kant this way, as shown in many of his writings, from *Faith and Knowledge* (1802) to the *Science of Logic* (1812–16), to the last edition of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830). His dissatisfaction with Kant's view concentrates mainly on two points that are not overtly related. First is the suspicion that Kant's restriction of self-consciousness and its unity-providing function to human subjects is much too narrow to lead to a convincing conception of objectivity. Second is the worry that the conception of the unity of an object Kant is working with is too poor to do justice to the real constitution of objects. Both dissatisfactions are rooted in turn in two basic Hegelian convictions. The first is that a correct conception of objectivity cannot be gained by making objectivity a function of an isolated subjective item such as human self-consciousness thought in opposition to a given manifold of material. This approach towards objectivity just leads to what he calls in *Faith and Knowledge* a *Reflexionsphilosophie* of subjectivity (see, most explicitly, *GW* 4:319ff.). The second is that Kant's categories are not sufficient for the concept of an object as such because they cannot account for the internal organization of an object and its individual history, both of which form the nature of an object if an object is understood correctly as a determinate whole.

Both these convictions have a good philosophical and phenomenological footing. From a phenomenological point of view, one might object against a Kantian view that to make objectivity a function of subjectivity blurs the distinction between psychological states of a human subject and a "real" world that is what it is independently of whatever a person takes it to be. One might also have problems with the attempt to make self-consciousness understood as a human faculty the sole source of the unification of a given multitude of data into a unity that can count as an object. After all, normally one is not inclined to believe oneself to be fully and exclusively responsible for seeing a mixture of colors and shapes as, say, the unity of a book – there should be some basis for such an assessment in what one is looking at itself. Similar phenomenological worries might occur with respect to a Kantian categorial constitution of objects. Are the Kantian categories sufficient to capture what an object is, that is,

to articulate what essentially belongs to it if considered in all its different states and circumstances? Do we learn what a good table (state, lover) in contrast to a not-so-good one is or what makes a tree or a stone the kind of object it is by constituting the object “table” (“state,” “lover”), “tree,” or “stone” in processing given data, relying exclusively on Kant’s categories?

Like many of his contemporaries (Jacobi, Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling), Hegel finds philosophical grounds for these convictions in what he takes to be the inherent vices (*Materialfehler*) of Kant’s system. Among them figure prominently his uneasiness with Kant’s endeavor to reconcile the proclaimed emptiness, evasiveness, and non-objectivity of the representation “I think,” that is, of self-consciousness, with its function of producing the identity of objects by restricting objects to appearances (cf. EL §§40ff.). This restriction, according to Hegel, indicates that Kant does not even attempt to deal with reality proper: after all, how can the “empty identity” of Kant’s I give rise to anything that can claim “real” or “objective” reality (EL §43)? For Hegel, it also counts as a philosophical deficit of Kant’s position that his categories and his list of the forms of judgment are just a random collection of contingent empirical findings, the necessity and completeness of which cannot be apprehended. If there is no necessity here, why should we accept them as constitutive elements of what objects are? If they are not shown to be complete, why should we not go beyond them (EL §42; see also *GW* 12:27f.)?

Though Hegel is seriously dissatisfied with Kant’s stance as to (1) how the very concept of an object comes about by relying on a list of random categories and (2) the role of human self-consciousness in this process and though he is genuinely annoyed with what he takes to be an outrageous result of Kant’s view, namely, the claim that we cannot know what objects really (independently from our perspective) are and therefore have to replace metaphysics by an ultimately psychological analysis of the workings of the mind, it is nonetheless obvious that he does not want to give up on the basic Kantian approach to object constitution in terms of categories and the activity of self-consciousness. In other words, Hegel rejects and wants to overcome not, primarily, the means Kant takes to be responsible for the formation of an object of cognition – the categories and the activity of self-consciousness – but rather Kant’s interpretation of them, particularly as features of the human subject and not the object itself.

However, this is only one aspect of Hegel’s criticism. He also objects that within the Kantian framework, it is difficult to account for the dynamic developmental processes every object undergoes, which define its very nature and make it the individual entity it is. Kant, so it seems to Hegel, can never bridge the gap between what an object is and what it has

been or will become, thus projecting the insurmountable “for us” (meaning: an object understood as a unified manifold under a concept) and “in itself” (meaning: an object conceived of in all its different states) distinction even into his world of appearances. For Hegel, this indicates the inability of Kant’s philosophy to overcome “rigid antitheses” (*festgewordene Gegensätze*; *GW* 4:13) and shows the urgency of engaging in the task of genuine philosophy (on Hegel’s view), namely, the endeavor to re-establish the “living connection and reciprocity” (*ibid.*, 14) between antitheses.

This situation leads to a “technical” problem that fundamentally determines Hegel’s entire philosophical project. The line of criticism pointed out so far can be maintained only if he is in position to redeem the two claims he vividly and provocatively expresses by the sentences from the Preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* mentioned at the outset of this essay: (1) “The truth is the whole. However, the whole is only the essence completing itself through its own development” (*GW* 9:19) and (2) “In my view, which must be justified by the exposition of the system itself, everything hangs on apprehending and expressing the truth not merely as *substance* but also equally as *subject*. At the same time, it is to be noted that substantiality comprises within itself the universal, that is, it comprises not only the *immediacy of knowledge* but also the immediacy of *being*, that is, immediacy *for knowledge*” (*GW* 9:18). In the Preface, these sentences are (confusingly) meant to allude to quite a number of different topics. But without doubt, they serve to alert the reader to the essential aspects of Hegel’s conception both of reality as a whole and of the individual items contained in it, that is, particular objects. These sentences are meant to convey, to put it somewhat roughly, that if one wants to find out what an object really is, if one wants to know what makes it the object it is, (1) one has to conceive of it as a totality of all its different states and developmental stages and (2) one has to regard the object-constituting principles as something to be found *within* the object and not somewhere else, irrespective of whether it is reality as a whole or an individual object that is addressed. These claims might be supported in a number of ways. However, for Hegel the options are limited because of what he takes for granted, namely, the fruitfulness and appropriateness of Kant’s general approach to objects. So the question for him to address is not so much to find some plausible explanation or other for these claims but to solve the rather technical problem of how to render them convincing within an approach that integrates the basic Kantian instruments of object constitution he too takes to be essential to every genuine conception of an object – categories and self-consciousness – into a picture of the nature of an object that can be proven also to be

a compelling alternative to Kant's own model. It is this technical problem that almost inescapably leads Hegel to conceive of objects as subjects.

IV

The way in which Hegel establishes his own conception of an object while being aware of the demands connected with his technical problem can be sketched along these lines: he starts with the uncontroversial assumption that the object of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) is the Truth. The term "the Truth" here does not refer to the notion of semantic validity or the truth predicate of propositional logic; Hegel is not saying that the object of knowledge is to find out whether or not a proposition is true or what the conditions for a true proposition are. Rather, in this context Hegel has a non-propositional concept of truth, according to which the term "the Truth" denotes the real or true nature of the object of knowledge (see EL §26). According to this understanding, knowledge aims to gain insight into what an object really is or what makes an object the object it is. Now, what is an object "really" or "in truth"? First, to be an object at all, it has to be an individual item that is determinate in two respects: (1) looked at from an external perspective, it has to be a unity that is distinguishable in a determinate way from other objects or from what it is not (Hegel's *ausschließendes Eins*; *GW* 21:158f.); (2) looked at from an internal point of view, it has to be determinate in the sense that it comprises the entirety of states and characteristics specific to its being the object it is (Hegel's *Sein-für-Anderes*; *GW* 21:159). Thus, each and every object is (1) looked at externally the sum total of what it is not and (2) regarded internally the sum total of its individuating characteristics and states. These features arise out of the peculiar structural set-up or the specific organizing principles that are at work within the formational process of an object. It is this set-up or these principles that Hegel calls "the concept" of an object.

Though these requirements at first glance might sound somewhat artificial and puzzling, they have a certain intuitive appeal. Concerning the first criterion, this is easy to see. After all, an object is, for example, a lemon or a stone as an individual item in the real world only if it is not a banana, human being, political state, or artwork, and so on. If, per impossibile, one could compile a complete list of all the individual objects in the world that are not lemons or stones, one would end up individuating an object that is a specific lemon or a particular stone. Things are less obvious when it comes to the second criterion. The idea here seems to be that an object is a lemon and not something else if it exhibits the right kind of states and characteristics, that is, those that are specific to a lemon.

So for an object to be a lemon means that it can be seen as a realization of all the elements that are characteristic of the kind to which the lemon belongs. The same is true of a stone or whatever else can count as an object. It is in this rather non-obvious sense that Hegel thinks of objects as wholes or totalities: they are determinate items in the world individuated by exclusion relations and kind characteristics that in turn have their *raison d'être* (*Seinsgrund*) in the organizational design inherent in the respective object.

Thus "the Truth" at which knowledge aims is just the same as the essential characteristics of an object or what an object really is. Obviously what this "Truth" is can be settled in many ways depending on epistemological and metaphysical preferences within the broad spectrum of idealistic and realistic worldviews. Contrary to a widely held belief, Hegel is very much interested in endorsing a realistic stance. His short and by no means enigmatic answer to the question at hand is that an object is the realization of its concept. The meaning of this formula is best explained in the introductory texts to both parts of the *Science of Logic*, that is, to the so-called objective and subjective logic (see *GW* 21:14f., 33; *GW* 12:23ff.). This formulation is intended to convey a quite simple message: do not try to think of objects as determined by characteristics that are rooted in conceptual operations taken to be external to the respective objects; instead, understand them as being constituted by their own conceptual activity or by an activity that is internal to them. If one is to attribute conceptual activities to a subject, whether human or not, then the message reads: do not think of objects as conceptual fabrications, which are merely the outcome of (possibly even necessary) activities of a subject that have nothing to do with the object itself, but think of objects as being subjects themselves, that is, think of them as expressions or manifestations of a process of self-realization of the peculiar conceptual elements that make them the objects they are. Concepts are active principles *within* the object. It is this fundamental fact that makes the object its own subject, and this subject is the concept. Thus speaking of objects as subjects just means that the object itself is the sole source of its constitution and that what it is depends on the way it – the object – realizes its own internal principles of formation – its concept. If one thinks of concepts as having the character of universality, where universality is to be understood in the sense explicated in the section on sense certainty in the *Phenomenology* (*GW* 9:65), according to which something is a universal if it is neither this nor that and is with equal indifference this as well as that individual item, then it becomes to some extent comprehensible why Hegel takes each object to be a more or less comprehensive unity of universality (a concept), particularity (a specification of the

concept), and singularity (the individual). It is in this sense that objects *are* subjects.

Up to this point, one could get the impression that Hegel's attempt to avoid Kant's model of object constitution and thus to discard the idea of objects as conceptual creations by human subjects amounts to not much more than wishful thinking. One could suspect that his endeavor to give back to objects an independent reality (objectivity), without divorcing them from constitutive conceptual elements (subjectivity), by transferring the conceptuality into the objects themselves leads just to a somewhat modernized version of Aristotle's conception of objects as entelechies mixed with Leibnizian features. Such a suspicion is not baseless, though it might underestimate Hegel's philosophical resources. Even if one were to grant some intuitive plausibility to Hegel's suggestion that objects are intrinsically conceptually organized wholes, the question as to how this conceptual organization takes place – what determines a concept of an object – remains to be answered.

V

It is here that Hegel's talk about objects as wholes and as subjects connects to Kant's conception of categories and self-consciousness as object-constituting principles and Hegel's very original reinterpretation thereof. Hegel's idea seems to be the following: if objects as wholes *are* subjects in that objects are realizations of their individual concepts, these concepts can be identified neither with what human minds conceptually contribute in terms of subjective thought determinations (categories in Kant's sense), nor can they be conceived as a kind of ideal entities that have an existence detached from their realization. Hegel makes this abundantly clear in his commentary on his so-called *Doppelsatz* from the *Philosophy of Right* in the introduction to his *Encyclopedia* (EL §8 note). Concepts are "objective thoughts" (EL §24): they are the totality of the organizing principles *within* the objects, which objects are, conversely, nothing but realized principles. These principles have the status of general or universal formative rules because they have to include everything which is necessary for something to be an object; that is, they have to contain the general conditions of "objecthood" (*Objekthaftigkeit*). Spelled out in terms of (Kantian) categories, this view would mean, among other things, that to be real objects, objects must have a certain kind of substantiality, exhibit certain causal powers, and have certain qualitative and quantitative characteristics – all this lies in their very nature, in their concepts. Against this background, one can understand why Hegel repeatedly emphasizes (1) that what he calls "concepts" or "thought determinations" has

nothing to do with ordinary talk about concepts, according to which concepts are general representations (*Allgemeinvorstellungen*) (e.g., EL §9 note, §162 note, §164 note) and (2) that for him concepts are concrete, as opposed to abstract, entities (e.g., *GW* 12:20f., 47f.; EL §164).

Now the question is this: what organizes Hegel's concepts? Are they just random collections of contingent characteristics that happen to be connected with what each object appears to be when encountered by human subjects, or are these concepts bound to have an ordered conceptual structure rooted in their very nature as concepts of objects? Hegel obviously opts for the latter alternative in that he claims that concepts have an intrinsic conceptual structure determined by what could be called the nature of what can count as a concept. Thinking of concepts as containing the nature of objects as Hegel does (see *GW* 21:14), "what can count as the nature of concepts" can in turn be understood as addressing the concept of a concept. Here the concepts of individual objects are no longer of interest, but the concept itself becomes the object. To capture this distinction, let us, with Hegel, call the concept itself the "Concept" (*GW* 21:17). Thus the question to be answered now is the following: what does the Concept consist in, how is it organized, what are its distinguishing features? The answer to this question is constrained by two self-imposed Hegelian demands. They both originate from his critical misgivings mentioned earlier concerning Kant's view as to how conceptual determinations (categories) contribute to the formation of an object. The first is to show that the different conceptual elements that inhere in the concept of an object are founded in the very nature of what constitutes a concept, that is, in the very concept of a Concept. Thus, for example, that an object has to have certain quantitative and qualitative characteristics, that it has to have certain substantial and causal features, that it is subject to standards of perfection, and so on, all this (and much more) must be shown to have a basis in the intrinsic design of the Concept. This first demand is owing to the obligation on Hegel's part to anchor in the concept of the Concept itself whatever is shown to be a necessary conceptual element in the process of object constitution so that one may assert the Concept as the sole subject of this process. The second demand is to bring to light a necessary connection between the conceptual elements that comprise the Concept, to avoid the complaint that Hegel brought up against Kant and his table of categories, namely, that he gives no convincing explanation of why his categories have to be accepted.

The theory of the Concept Hegel develops within these constraints is recorded in his *Science of Logic*. Perhaps better: the *Science of Logic* is his theory of the Concept. Obviously the aim of this theory is not to present a narrative about the way concepts of individual objects such as lemons,

stones, or states come about in terms of their conceptual conditions. Its purpose is explicitly to determine what exactly belongs to the conceptual elements that inhere in the Concept in general or looked at just for itself (*GW* 21:17). Here the term “the Concept” is to be understood as a name for the sum total of the conceptual characteristics (categories) that are the guiding principles determining what can play a role in the formation of specific concepts of particular objects. In compliance with the first demand mentioned in the previous paragraph, the conceptual characteristics inherent in the Concept have to be framed in terms of internal differentiations or states of the Concept itself because the Concept is meant to be conceived of as the only and ultimate subject. Hegel tries to accomplish this task by presenting what he calls “objective” (referring to his *Logic of Being and Essence*) and “subjective” (referring to his *Logic of the Concept*) conceptual determinations as different articulations at different levels of the same thing – the Concept (see *GW* 21:45f.). In obedience to the second demand, the internally differentiated conceptual items have to form a sequence that is supposed to reveal a necessary connection between these items. This task Hegel aims to perform by introducing the operation of determinate negation, a notoriously controversial methodological tool meant to provide a way to trace connections between conceptual characteristics in the form of a process of conceptual self-determination by means of a special procedure of negation. How to spell out the details of Hegel’s logical theory of the Concept and his methodological maxims is and will be for a long time a daunting undertaking. However, the overall message is rather obvious: conceptual elements or categories are not subjective fabrications of the (human) mind, as Kant wants us to believe, but have a thoroughly objective basis in that they are the result of the internal differentiation of what is the subject of and in each and every object – the Concept (in general).

Having transformed subjective categories into objective conceptual determinations, that is, exporting (as it were) the object-forming conceptual principles out of the human subject and importing them into the Concept as the internal ground of being of the object, all that is left for Hegel to do to complete his programme of relocating the major elements of Kant’s anti-metaphysical epistemological framework into an object-centered setting is to find a place within this new environment for Kant’s “original-synthetic unity of apperception,” which Hegel relates to the unity of self-consciousness and the I (*GW* 12:17). For Hegel this relocation poses no obstacle because he equates this unity or the I with the Concept (see *GW* 12:198). The justification for this identification is to be found in his interpretation of what the unity of apperception is meant to achieve within the Kantian framework.

From early on, Hegel takes Kant's recognition of apperception and its unifying force as a faculty that is the basis of all categorical, that is, conceptual determinations of objects, as one of Kant's main philosophical achievements (cf. *GW* 4:5 and 327; he repeats this assessment in his *Science of Logic* at *GW* 12:17f. and even in the *EL* §41ff.). However, the problem with Kant's account, according to Hegel, is that he separates this object-constituting unifying capacity (apperception) – which Kant rightly relates to self-consciousness – from the object by attributing it to the human subject, instead of realizing that this capacity is a distinguishing feature of the organizing principle within all objects, namely, the Concept (see *GW* 12:192ff.). It is this misunderstanding that gives rise directly to Kant's controversial and implausible distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Had Kant recognized that this capacity is the basis for bringing together *in the object* conceptual universality with objective singularity or individuality, he would have comprehended that “the Concept therefore is nothing else but the nature of self-consciousness, has no other moments or determinations than the I itself” (*GW* 12:18f.). This Hegelian interpretation leads to an interesting shift in the connotations of the term “self-consciousness”: it no longer denotes an exclusive characteristic of human beings but becomes a general mark of objectivity in that it is treated as a constitutive feature of the Concept.

VI

Hegel's conception of objectivity in terms of a lawful process of conceptual self-realization within the object obviously undercuts Kant's attempt to discard metaphysics by declaring the conceptual elements involved in the process of object constitution to be subjective achievements of the human mind. Does this mean that Hegel wants to restore metaphysics? In a certain sense yes, in another sense no, depending on what metaphysics is supposed to achieve. Hegel definitely does not want to re-establish a type of metaphysics grounded in what he takes to be erroneous beliefs about the nature of concepts and objects and concluding in completely unfounded claims as to the nature of the soul, the world, and God. These misguided beliefs and conclusions are, according to Hegel, characteristic of time-honored metaphysical systems in the Leibniz-Wolff tradition (see *EL* §26ff.), though at least some of them show up also in the self-proclaimed destructive criticism of these systems, that is, Kant's theoretical philosophy (see *EL* §60 note), thus raising doubts as to the soundness of this criticism. However, if one thinks of metaphysics, like Hegel, as being “the scientific [meaning: philosophical, R. P. H.] edifice concerning the world that is accomplished solely by means of thoughts” (*GW* 21:48; see

also *GW* 12:196) and recognizes that thoughts are best understood as objective processes of conceptual self-realization, then metaphysics indeed has to be revitalized not as a science that gives access to super-sensible objects but as a science whose correct name should be “logic.” For it is this science that provides insight into the mechanisms of the conceptual development of reality. Hence Hegel states explicitly that it is “the logical science that represents metaphysics proper [*die eigentliche Metaphysik ausmacht*] or pure speculative philosophy” (*GW* 11:7). Logic is meant to replace (*an die Stelle treten*) metaphysics, not to abandon it (see also *GW* 21:48).

It is an interesting question whether the *manner* in which Hegel tries to realize his project to replace metaphysics by logic can be deemed a success. A considered answer to this question goes beyond the scope of the outline here of some basic convictions guiding his approach to understanding the constitution of reality. However, as mentioned earlier, the reception of Hegel’s philosophy in the past two centuries hints at a negative verdict. The details of Hegel’s methodological apparatus and his so-called logical derivations of widely different kinds of phenomena in all areas of his philosophical system especially have always been somewhat opaque and have encountered a lot of resistance. This negative stance has been, strangely enough, not much moderated by the fact that at the same time it is acknowledged that Hegel himself was able to arrive by his peculiar means at results that have proven to have enormous significance for our understanding of a wide range of phenomena, especially in the social, political, and cultural spheres.

Independently of what both competent and not so competent critics have objected to concerning the *manner* in which Hegel tries to realize his project, there is, I believe, reason to find the essential assumptions on which this project is based rather compelling. Most important here is Hegel’s far-reaching decision (to which some of his post-Kantian contemporaries doubtless already pointed the way) to question the prevailing belief in the insurmountable opposition between the subjective and the objective, the conceptual and the non-conceptual, the mental and the material, and so on, a divide that has proven both fruitless and utterly confusing in discussion in metaphysics and epistemology. The Hegelian idea to put the subject “into” the object or, what amounts to the same thing, to objectivize (*objektivieren*) the subject by conceiving of all phenomena as different forms of conceptual self-realization is meant to encourage a way of thinking about reality that is in tune with the conviction that whatever there is bound to be subject to some general and thus conceptual principles of (internal and external) organization, while acknowledging what might be called “the autonomy of the object.” Whether this way of thinking can be

accomplished only within Hegel's framework, that is, whether one has to think of conceptual self-realization in terms of a process in which Hegel's "Spirit" comes to realize itself, is by no means obvious. Maybe in our time there might be more "modern" means available to come to an understanding of one of the most puzzling features of reality – the opposition between subject and object – that makes use of Hegel's basic insight that objects are (also) subjects.

8 The Historical Turn and Late Modernity

Karl Ameriks

The philosophical problem of modernity has been a major topic of discussion in recent years. I argue that a number of considerations warrant distinguishing a long-standing philosophical period, within the broader era of modernity, that should be called “late modernity.” This phase primarily concerns post-Kantian developments from the period of the earliest work of the Early Romantics and Hegel. In contrast to popular broadly Hegelian approaches, I defend the basic ideas underlying the Early Romantic conception of late modern philosophy.

Background

There is no easy way to define the scope of modernity and modern philosophy. One approach is simply to pick a convenient date and label everything after that “modern.” This kind of approach can include much too much. The notion of a “via moderna” goes back to the Middle Ages; there are also arguments that the earliest forms of Christianity ushered in an era that was modern in contrast to the pagan religions¹ – in which case the scope of “modern” begins to overlap with “ancient” and “medieval” rather than contrasting with them. But if this pitfall is avoided by stipulating, as most Western philosophers do, that modernity starts roughly around the time of Descartes and his immediate predecessors, the worry remains that simply relying on such a starting date has the unfortunate result of making the whole era after the seventeenth century appear much too homogeneous.

Fortunately, there is a way to avoid a homogeneous approach, and to acknowledge crucial distinctions in the era of Descartes and after, without having to go so far as to claim that we are living in a “postmodern” age. Instead, it can be said that at some point an important and distinctively “late modern”² strand of thought has arisen, a strand that is still modern

¹ Cf. Pippin 1991, p. 17.

² The term “late modernity” is used at Pippin 2015b, p. 161; see also “a modernism uncomfortable with modernity” (Pippin 1991, p. 28).

but can have much more in common with the general twentieth-century cultural phenomenon called “modernism” than with what academic writers call the period of “modern” – in contrast to “contemporary” – philosophy. To proceed in this way in marking what one means by “modern,” it is necessary to select relatively recent (rather than Renaissance or earlier) substantive characteristics, yet ones that are not so recent as to preclude the possibility that we may now be living in an era that no longer shares all or even most of these marks of the modern in their original form. An obvious candidate along this line is the concern with a kind of strong systematicity in philosophy, one that reflects the general impact of the modern exact sciences and the belief in significant formal analogies between the structure of these sciences and what is henceforth appropriate for philosophy in the ‘Cartesian’ era.³ This approach is inclusive enough to allow movements as different as continental rationalism and British empiricism, as well as forms of post-Reformation theism and non-theism, to all count as paradigmatically modern.

In focusing in this way on the unprecedented event of what we now call “the” scientific revolution, one need not ignore the relevance of other key processes that coincided with this revolution. Descartes’s own work has long been interpreted as putting a great stress not only on science but also on responding to, and intensifying, other major developments such as (1) the rebirth of philosophical skepticism (and its increasing focus on a psychological version primarily concerned with the problem of the external world); (2) the turn against esoteric elitism through an appeal to the healthy universal common sense allegedly underlying vernacular languages and bourgeois society; and (3) the impact of the Reformation, with its promotion of new social structures that sharply restrict the political and other claims of the medieval church but still aim at the goal of fulfilling most traditional teleological beliefs.

These roughly simultaneous developments reinforced one another, for there are obvious reasons why (1) anti-skepticism, (2) ‘Cartesian’ common sense, and (3) optimistic secularism appealed to those who also welcomed a close connection between philosophy and the triumphs of modern science. All this can be granted without denying that some of the leading philosophers in Descartes’s wake still happened to be skillful

³ I use scare quotes here to acknowledge that Descartes’s own thought has much more complexity than one would suspect from stereotypes of the ‘Cartesian’ era by empiricists, Wittgensteinians, reactionaries, and Heideggerians. Heidegger may nonetheless be credited with stressing the point that “judging philosophy according to the idea of science is the most disastrous debasement of its inner essence” (Heidegger 1975, XXIX:2, as cited in Pippin 2005b, p. 66, n. 22). The complexity of the era in general is noted at Pippin 1991, p. 145.

advocates of skeptical arguments (Hume), or harsh critics of common sense (Spinoza), or vigorous proponents of traditional supernatural religion (Malebranche). Recognizing these complications is compatible with contending that until at least the end of the eighteenth century, a broad Enlightenment consensus was forming, one that combined a this-worldly admiration for the systematic rigor and accomplishments of the new physics with a desire to construct a quasi-Newtonian philosophical system with an extremely ambitious ground, orientation, and goal. More specifically, in this period the ideal was what can be called an “imperialist” philosophy with (1) a primitive apodictic foundation and (2) a vast interconnected set of derivable and universally applicable exact results, all aimed at (3) a “heavenly city”⁴ of the future to be built without reliance on the nonnaturalist metaphysics associated with special revelation. Given the impressive subtlety of Descartes’s epistemology, the evident fecundity of the consequences of systems such as his and Galileo’s and Newton’s, and the obvious social benefits of the new science, whose appeal crossed over old political and theological borders, the intense enthusiasm for this new kind of philosophy was understandable.

Ever since its popular characterization in these terms in the late 1780s by his influential contemporary advocate Karl Reinhold,⁵ Kant’s elaborate system, with its three *Critiques* along with writings on key topics such as the “age of Enlightenment” and the idea of a “metaphysics that will be able to come forward as a science,” has generally been taken as the paradigmatic expression of this Enlightenment consensus. It can be argued, of course, that this Reinholdian characterization is overstated in significant respects.⁶ That is, at various key points Kant’s mature work falls back on (1’) common basic “facts” (e.g., the theoretical fact of objective experience itself, or the practical “fact of reason”) rather than inner ‘Cartesian’ certainties and concedes that (2’) it is relying not on mere minimal universal rationality but (3’) on the unconditioned goals of a special higher faculty called Reason – a faculty whose practical satisfaction in the project of an “ethical commonwealth’s” highest good is ultimately argued to require a reference to supernatural grounds after all, even while being expressed in stridently anticlerical terms.⁷

The overstated nature of Reinhold’s characterization of Kant’s Critical project was not fully appreciated by the most influential successors of Kant – notably Fichte, early Schelling, and Hegel, in contrast to the Early

⁴ See Becker 1932. ⁵ See Reinhold 2005.

⁶ See Ameriks 2000, ch. 2, and Ameriks 2003.

⁷ In speaking of Kant’s “hesitant revolution,” Pippin (1991, p. 12) in effect acknowledges these complications.

Romantics of the Jena Circle. For a long time, the most prominent German philosophers aimed at producing their own allegedly scientific version of an imperialist philosophy, with (1) a strong Reinholdian foundation (e.g., the “pure I” of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*), (2) an extraordinarily broad scope (e.g., the “absolute Idea” of Hegel’s *Logic* and *Encyclopedia*), and (3) a stunningly uplifting telos (e.g., the unconditioned union of fulfilled nature and history in Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*), even while insisting on having an even better claim to rigorous systematicity than that of the new exact sciences.⁸ The very popularity of this kind of system building by Kant’s idealist successors was in part responsible for their undoing. The easily perceived contrasts between all the elaborate imperialist systems, as well as the striking variations within their own formulations, led outsiders to become all the more skeptical about modern philosophy in general (and thus often to throw the baby out with the bathwater) – especially when the peculiar expressions and nasty infighting of these bold systematicians came to contrast all the more obviously with the remarkable ongoing progress of the natural sciences. No wonder, then, that harsh attacks against philosophy in general arose, especially with the birth of scientific positivism in the middle of the nineteenth century and repeated radical naturalist programs ever since then – programs that, ironically, often still share the imperialist character of Reinhold’s first system, but with the aim of making natural science the foundation of philosophy (by turning the latter into simply a codification of the former’s procedures) rather than the reverse.

At the same time, there also arose, in contrast to both scientific and philosophical foundationalisms, a fascination with fashionable writers at the margins of academic philosophy. For most of their popular readers, these highly influential outsiders (e.g., Schopenhauer, the ‘aesthetic Kierkegaard,’ Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault) *appeared* to be promoting modernism as a kind of relativism – at least with respect to the ‘results’ of traditional philosophy. In the place of imperialism and scientism, these writers were often taken to endorse – or at least, *malgré lui*, to encourage – positions such as (1) psychological or social subjectivism (as a ground), (2) aestheticism (as an orientation and effect), or (3) historicism (as an end point) – or even all these at once, and perhaps even nihilism⁹ as

⁸ See Ameriks 2000, ch. 2, and Frank 1997, Part II. On the strong systematic aspirations of philosophy in this era, see Franks 2005 and Förster 2012.

⁹ On the worry that an appeal, especially by Nietzscheans, to “mere taste” may encourage nihilism, see Pippin 1991, p. 42, and Pippin 2015b, p. 293. See Ameriks 2012, chs. 14 and 15, for an argument that Nietzsche’s view is, on his terms, always aesthetic in a tragic sense but in an objective way that does not treat taste as arbitrary. Pippin (1991, p. 186 n. 69; cf. 1999, p. 158) remarks that Nietzsche develops an “unqualified” view that tragedy, and the primacy of artists in general, is a dead ideal. His reference to *On the Genealogy of*

well. At the same time, of course, many academic philosophers (e.g., in our era, Searle, Putnam, Brandom) chose not to leap to any of these extremes and remained attached to some kind of difficult to define *merely naturalistic* middle ground, such as moderate versions of pragmatism or non-reductive materialism, which affirm the primacy of science's ontology and explanatory achievements but try to leave room for adherence to more commitments or truths than those that can be established by anything clearly resembling a successful exact science.

Instead of further characterizing the different views of either the fashionable or academic writers of the post-1830 era, I will be focusing on their still somewhat neglected predecessors, the Early Romantics in the remarkable 1787–1806 Jena era. These extraordinary philosopher-poets, writing in the direct shadow of Goethe and Schiller, espoused a distinctive and strong anti-imperialist position, one that should already be called late modern rather than simply modern, and with grounds that are anti-relativist as well, in large part because of connections with a kind of Kantian universalism – as expressed, for example, in their deep respect for the *ideals* of the French Revolution. Despite this Kantian grounding, a tendency remains to associate their writings more with what is taken to be the ultimate position of their harshly anti-Kantian successors, the fashionable writers who can seem to be especially vulnerable to the charge of relativism. I believe it is even possible to rescue most of these later writers from this charge, but, without taking up that challenging gauntlet, there is enough to do in clarifying what can be meant by considering their predecessors, the Early Romantics, as the first, and paradigmatic, instance of a *sensible late modern* position.

It is striking that the same disparaging characterizations of the later writers, as encouraging subjectivism, aestheticism, or historicism, tend to get reflected back onto writings of the earlier era. Moreover, these characterizations frequently echo charges that were already leveled repeatedly by Hegel.¹⁰ His attack on the romantics in general (to be distinguished from what he happens to call the “romantic,” i.e., modern era in art) continues to have an enormous effect, in part because later German Romanticism (e.g., Friedrich Schlegel's late reactionary phase), like the general notion of the romantic in other cultures does in fact connect with

Morals, however, does not take into account that, in the relevant section (Third Essay), Nietzsche is criticizing art insofar as it functions within the “ascetic ideal” – which is the opposite of his own aesthetic ideal. In general, Nietzsche's constant attachment to the figure of Dionysus shows, I believe, his unrescinded commitment to an aesthetic, tragic understanding of existence – albeit one that moves sharply away from his early admiration for Wagner.

¹⁰ See Ameriks 2006, ch. 9.

dangerous attitudes such as irrationalism, chauvinism, and racism. In addition, the reputation of the Jena Early Romantics was damaged all the more, in Anglophone circles, when popular writers such as Isaiah Berlin sought, anachronistically, to find the roots of the horrors of twentieth-century politics in the attitude of the original romantic generation, as if it were largely a “counter-Enlightenment” phenomenon.¹¹

Rather than attempting a detailed textual treatment of Hölderlin, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis, and their philosophical friends such as Niethammer, von Herbart, (the ‘romantic’) Schelling, A. W. Schlegel, and Schleiermacher – which in any case has already been offered elsewhere¹² – my main goal here is simply to sketch out the basic philosophical notions that can be said to define the very *idea* of Early German Romanticism as a sensible late modern movement, one that aims to maintain the kernel of the general enlightened trajectory of modern thought while dismantling its shell, the imperialist components that strongly attracted philosophers throughout the Descartes to Kant era and then beyond in Reinhold and German Idealism. Romanticism in this sense is not primarily a negative, let alone irrationalist, movement but one that has the positive feature of progressively intensifying three major developments in post-Kantian thought, developments that I have labeled the Subjective Turn, the Aesthetic Turn, and the Historical Turn – all of which can be combined in a movement that can also be called the Interpretive Turn in philosophy.¹³

One advantage of these labels is that they directly connect with Kant’s rationalist philosophy, which also has deep *subjective* and *aesthetic* and *historical components*, even if not in the more developed sense that is definitive of Early Romanticism. Another advantage of these specific labels is that a proper understanding of them can serve as an explanation of, and direct rejoinder to, the still common tendency to dismiss Early Romantic philosophical positions on the grounds that they supposedly promote subjectivism, aestheticism, and historicism – and hence a pernicious relativism. What is needed here is a set of clear distinctions between (1) Kant’s still broadly rationalist understanding of these three components, in contrast to (2) the Early Romantic modification of them into late modern notions, notions that still contrast with (3) the even more radical, but not irrational, main tendencies of the Nietzschean-Heideggerian era. These first three options are then also to be distinguished from not only (4) a relativistic understanding of these components, but also

¹¹ For a corrective, see Beiser 1996. ¹² See Frank 1997 and Behler 1993.

¹³ See Ameriks 2012, ch. 15. Pippin (1991, p. 104) speaks of Nietzsche’s “reliance on an interpretive activity akin to novel- or poem-making.”

(5) scientific and (6) moderate but fully naturalistic positions, as well as (7) the (non-Kantian) imperialist systems of classical German Idealism and (8) their classic early modern predecessors.

With regard to alternative (7), a serious further complication confronts setting out this taxonomy now, namely, that Early Romanticism needs also to be situated with respect to the extremely influential and nuanced versions of Hegelianism that recently have been developed. As with the first “young Hegelians,” many contemporary fellow travelers try to distance themselves from the traditional “schoolbook” account of Hegelianism as an imperialist system obsessed with (1) an inescapable “presupposition-less” beginning;¹⁴ (2) a “thoroughgoing skepticism” that is actually a confident rationalism that aims to defeat, in necessary dialectical order, all alternatives;¹⁵ and (3) a “complete” phenomenology of the stages of consciousness, complemented by an *Encyclopedia* that culminates in the comprehensive claims of “absolute spirit,” which reveal modernity to be, in principle, a reconciled domain fulfilling all our deepest needs.¹⁶ The alternative, and much more pragmatic, reading of Hegelianism¹⁷ downplays its metaphysics¹⁸ and stresses those passages in which Hegel treats modernity as a field of competing philosophical positions, distinguished primarily by processes of dialectical rationality that are distinctive in stressing concrete social-historical conceptual conflicts, and eschewing any reliance on the intuitions and givens of allegedly dogmatic empiricist, rationalist, supernaturalist, or merely scientific positions. Rather than trying to resolve the issue of which is the most accurate and promising reading of Hegel’s philosophy, I am concerned simply with noting some ways in which even non-imperialist readings of Hegel – whatever their advantages – may still tend, at times, to obscure the value of non-Hegelian late modern positions, and may needlessly encourage the common presumption that these positions are distinguished by a kind of subjectivism, aestheticism, or historicism.

Details

A first step here is to return to Kant and specify the senses in which his Critical system is, in important ways, more oriented toward the subjective, the aesthetic, and the historical than earlier versions of modern philosophy, and yet in a way that also stops short of taking the late modern

¹⁴ See Houlgate 2006. ¹⁵ See Forster 1987. ¹⁶ See Hardimon 1994.

¹⁷ See especially Robert Pippin’s path-breaking interpretations, as well as work by Terry Pinkard, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, and Sally Sedgwick.

¹⁸ For more metaphysical interpretations of Hegel, see Horstmann 1990, Bowman 2013, Kreines 2015.

Romantic plunge into giving a clear (but not irrational) primacy to these notions. With respect to the general dimension of the subjective, the obvious key point is that, of course, Kant stresses subjectivity, even though, in contrast to later idealists, he does not focus in detail on the peculiarities of self-consciousness. More importantly, in contrast to earlier modern philosophers, his philosophy is highly critical of a narrow epistemological or metaphysical notion of the subject. His “Refutation of Idealism” is a revolutionary rejection of the Cartesian (as well as empiricist) idea of basing philosophy on claims made by a subject’s mere inner focus on itself, and his “Paralogisms” is an equally striking rejection of a Leibnizian (or Berkeleyan or Humean) theoretical ontology of mere minds. It is often thought that Kant’s epistemological procedure in his transcendental arguments, along with his metaphysical commitment to transcendental idealism, nevertheless forces him into a subjectivistic position. But these charges rest on uncharitable and serious misunderstandings. Kant’s philosophy does focus on subjective components, in the process of critically determining the limits of our faculties, but all his epistemological claims about these limits are consistent with his insisting that we do in fact access, in knowing, willing, and even feeling (e.g., in the aesthetic sense of a “supersensible” ground), numerous important objective structures that even have a necessary status. Similarly, the metaphysics of his transcendental idealism rejects a mentalistic monadology or phenomenalism and instead concludes that there is some “in itself” feature, beyond our determining capacities as theoretical subjects organizing data in space and time.¹⁹ This may be an extravagant claim, but instead of counting as a kind of subjectivism, it might rather be regarded as allowing an excessive form of objectivism. In sum, Kant does initiate a significant kind of Subjective Turn, but in a very moderate way that is nothing like subjectivism.

A similar account can be given of Kant’s treatment of the aesthetic realm. On the one hand, as his readers immediately realized, his third *Critique* is revolutionary in elevating aesthetic experience by giving it an “autonomous” status, distinct from the mere conceptual, sensory, or moral aims of the rest of our life. On the other hand, despite his innovative notion of aesthetic autonomy and the deep metaphysical significance he gives to our aesthetic encounter with nature as well as art, he severely restricts the cognitive implications of aesthetic judgment and is clearly no advocate of art for art’s sake. In sum, Kant does initiate a significant kind of Aesthetic Turn, but in a very moderate way that is nothing like aestheticism.

¹⁹ See Ameriks 2012, chs. 3 and 4.

A more complicated analysis is appropriate for Kant's relation to history. In many respects, Kant's work reveals an extraordinary interest in history, especially in his most popular late essays as well as in his detailed early lectures on anthropology, which had an enormous impact on Herder and thereby on Herder's many readers. From the beginning of Kant's mature career, after his reading of Rousseau in the early 1760s, what he was most deeply concerned with was the general issue of the historical trajectory of human life, the problems of evil and providence, and the possibility and importance of committing to the project of striving for the highest good.²⁰ And yet, despite this overriding concern, the constant methodology of Kant's work, like that of most traditional philosophers, was not to give primacy to history but to draw attention to the basic, in principle always present,²¹ conditions for accessing eternal and necessary truths. Moreover, like the imperialist philosophers, he clearly believed that he had settled all the most basic philosophical issues and repeatedly declared that with respect to philosophy itself, there is no significant new history ahead but only progress in filling out incidentals (which is at least progress of a sort, instead of "a merely random groping, and, what is worst of all, a groping among mere concepts," B xv). In sum, despite his numerous involvements with history, Kant's philosophy is not itself committed to the Historical Turn, let alone historicism.

It is their quite different attitude toward history that most distinguishes the first post-Kantian philosophers. My hypothesis is that the new orientation of this generation began, ironically enough, largely on account of a reaction to the obvious failure of the audaciously ambitious nonhistorical claim, by Kant and his very first followers (above all Reinhold, who arrived at Jena in 1787 and made it at once the new center of philosophy, but then offered his own *Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* and *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens*²² to take the place of the *Critique*), that the Critical system, or at least some immediate successor, had in a sense already accomplished an "end to history" and resolved the fundamentals, even if not the details, of philosophy's major issues. When Reinhold himself, and then Fichte and the early Schelling and Hegel, soon came to appreciate the difficulties in the reception of even Kant's revolutionary and supposedly non-dogmatic approach, this phenomenon (along with the effect of writers such as Rousseau, Lessing, and Herder) awakened in the whole Jena generation a deepened interest in

²⁰ See Ameriks 2012, chs. 1 and 2.

²¹ Pippin (2015b, p. 10) raises the question of how the "in principle" claim can be sustained, a topic that deserves detailed treatment elsewhere.

²² On the historical complexities of the latter essay, see Ameriks 2010.

trying to account for how it is that even the best philosophies and world-views give way to one another in time. In the process, each of these philosophers proposed a distinctive philosophy of history and a systematic account of the historical nature of philosophy itself. What, in my terms, defines their Historical Turn as such is not their mere interest in history, or the specific content of their work, but above all the common *form* of their writing, that is, the way this generation showed in practice that henceforth philosophy should not present itself as a timeless axiomatic complex but must display a sequential and argumentative resolution of the specific difficulties of one's immediate predecessors (as in Hegel's *Differenzschrift*, his early coming to terms with Fichte, Schelling, and Reinhold) – just as worldviews in general were to be understood not as immaculate revelations or free-floating hypotheses about pure eternal types, but as forced responses to the specific conflicts and “spirit of the age” in which deeply socially rooted subjects found themselves.

Given this development, two major possibilities remained, two quite different variations of the Historical Turn. One possibility was to fall back – as the academic philosophers did – into constructing yet another attempt at an exhaustive and final system after all, albeit one that included, in much more detail than earlier modern philosophy, an explicit teleology and a secular ‘theodicy’ that takes into account all the main false starts and complexities of previous systems.²³ Despite its underlying commitment to a fixed metaphysical system, this tactic can still be said to be part of the Historical Turn that comes after Kant because, no matter how conclusive each if its advocates took his own system to be, these advocates always insisted, at some point, on foregrounding in their style of argumentation the revolutionary and nonadditive structures of history's and philosophy's development, the way that progress involves repression, negation, and having to go “behind the back of consciousness” (PhG §87) in ways that the earlier, static rationalist tradition could never appreciate. In this way, they were attached to a kind of basically “dialogical” approach to philosophy, a critically interpretive, rather than merely dismissive or additive, engagement with the past, and one that was unique in realizing that it had to face the special challenge of relating its authority to the dramatically changing reputations of modern science and traditional theology.²⁴

²³ For new light on this concern with history in relation to Fichte, see Posesorski 2012.

²⁴ Pippin (2015b, pp. 5f.) evokes Schlegel's notion of “symphilosophizing,” and even claims philosophy is “essentially” “dialogical,” but his term for this, “interanimations,” deserves qualification. The distinctive feature of historical contexts – unlike social or geographical ones – is that the other “conversation partner” in principle can never respond, and, moreover, our own orientation to an earlier partner is vulnerable to

Another more radical way of taking the Historical Turn, however, was to move away from system building and any imitation of even the general form of the natural sciences, and to stress a deeply perplexed sense of belatedness in philosophy and culture, a recognition that henceforth the imperialist modern dream of a complete philosophical system and reconciled worldview was over. This alternative version of the Historical Turn, in the form initially developed by the Early Romantics, was not historicism, or relativism of any sort, let alone mere aestheticism or psychological subjectivism but, on the contrary, was combined with a commitment to what, in their most famous fragment, Schlegel and Novalis called “universal progressive” writing.²⁵ The terms “universal” and “progressive” are each important. The stress on “universal” expresses a philosophical recognition of the new idea of “universal history” and the literally revolutionary thought – just then breaking into widespread explicit appreciation after developments such as the aftermath of the Bastille, Kant’s moral philosophy, and Britain’s debates on the slave trade (all explicitly emphasized by Reinhold) – that human subjects are all part of one earthly world, with basic faculties that are fundamentally common to all and worthy of respect by all. A similar commitment, alongside perceptive considerations of the complex and not linearly progressive course of Western history, through Greek and early Christian stages to modern times, is found in an especially impressive form in Hölderlin’s work, which reflects a deep appreciation of Kant’s moral writings.²⁶ One can, of course, raise objections to these Kantian writings, and to universalist and progressivist views in general, but the crucial point in this context is simply that the clear attachment to such views in the late modern perspective of the Early Romantics is sufficient to repudiate any charge that they were aiming to appeal to anything like merely individualistic or chauvinist concerns.

This is not to deny that the Early Romantics meant to stress, even much more than Kant, the notions of the “subjective” and the “aesthetic.”²⁷ This is in large part precisely because they believed philosophy now had to

being in part preformed by that partner’s unrecognized, and perhaps unrecognizable, influence. Hence, in history, instead of a direct “interanimation” of a later B on a prior A, only A can causally act on B, and only B can exert an interpretive act toward A, an act that may be toward what A is only taken to be, not what it is in itself, and that, even so, may be corrupted – or enlightened – in hidden ways by A itself.

²⁵ Schlegel 1991, #116. Cf. Ameriks 2014, Kneller 2014, p. 114, and Pippin’s description of Hegel’s idealism as “collective, progressive, historical self-determination” (1991, p. 69).

²⁶ On Hölderlin’s relation to Kant, see Ameriks 2012, chs. 13 and 14, and Ameriks 2014.

²⁷ Pippin (2015b, p. 163), like Kierkegaard and many others, sometimes uses the term “aesthetic” to imply indifference to others, but this common approach can obscure the possibility of an objective aesthetic attitude that is beyond the simple dichotomy of egoism and altruism.

take on an especially challenging historical and activist form. Precisely because they did not take the systematicity of modern science to be the best model for philosophy in general, they realized that the most consistent and effective advocacy of their progressive universalist views required an innovative methodology, a form of writing that would effectively draw attention to, and stimulate, the subjective and aesthetic dimensions of experience even while remaining sensitive to the dangers of aestheticism and subjectivism in general. Their underlying attachment to the social, moral, and political goals of Kantian rationalism, in a broad sense, is what made their aesthetic but non-subjectivistic approach consistent. Kant himself argues that while the most fundamental aspects of modern philosophy can be given a rational *defense*, the most basic truths of his system, and its ultimate goals, cannot be revealed by mere understanding alone. In addition to drawing on the commonsense acceptance of the external world and other minds, as well as the special intuitions connected with the mathematical sciences, Kant's philosophy stresses the fundamental non-theoretical phenomena of our aesthetic and moral consciousness. It draws attention to special experiences of harmony, awe, and respect, all of which are consistent with, and are even oriented toward, reason in an unconditional sense but are not definable in terms of mere intellectual attention. Furthermore, the third *Critique* states that in "poetry everything proceeds honestly and uprightly" (KU 5: 327)²⁸ and goes on to argue that art, as in the exemplary case of Milton's work, can and should use aesthetic Ideas to indirectly serve our ultimate vocation, which is to encourage commitment to the hard work of aiming toward the highest good despite its theoretical mysteriousness. It is no wonder then that Novalis and Schlegel fill out their famous three-part account of Romanticism by saying that it is not only "universal" and "progressive" but also a kind of "poetry," by which they mean any kind of writing (*Dichtung*) or expression that has special strength precisely because it makes an aesthetic appeal to feeling (and imagination²⁹), which is the most subjective of our faculties and is, for us (as Kant also realizes), the crucial motivating factor needed beyond what bare intellect and will alone can provide. Despite this stress on feeling, it remains true that precisely because this Early Romantic emphasis on a style of writing that is poetic, or aesthetic in a general sense, is simultaneously connected with universal (i.e., *philosophical*-subjective) as well as

²⁸ Cited in Zinkin 2015.

²⁹ One can worry, of course, that the "creative," "force of imagination" (Pippin 2015b, p. 156) *alone* can be capricious, and that imagination's connection to desire may often be rooted in suspicious mimetic pressures (Pippin 1991, p. 34) – but these general worries need not count against the Romantic thought that imagination can also be directed, as in mathematics, at genuine and universal necessities. See Wood 2014.

progressive (i.e., *moral*-historical) intentions, it can deflect the charge of historicism as well as of aestheticism and subjectivism.

Unlike most progressive universalist positions, however, the historical stance of the Early Romantics is modern in a “late” sense that contrasts sharply with the traditional and still broadly linear view of most Enlightenment thinkers. Often Hegelians imply that this difference has to do with a naive nostalgic desire of modern poets to return to a purer, better state of existence in Early Greece,³⁰ or primitive Christianity, or the middle ages of the Holy Roman Empire – just as Rousseau is sometimes misunderstood as advocating a return to a pure state of nature. It is true that Schlegel, Novalis, and Hölderlin each, in different ways at different times, has a deep sense that something has been lost that was experienced in long past times – and, in fact, often in exotic, long-overlooked ages, such as the Sanskrit world, or pre-Socratic Greece, or pre-clerical religion. But the recognition of these earlier values, the Herderian stress on the notion that later cultures can in some ways be just basically *different* instead of better or worse than earlier ones, and the sorrow-tinged feeling of belatedness that reverberates throughout much of Early Romantic work are all still consistent with a realistic orientation that is primarily future oriented.

To understand this possibility, consider the fact that when, like Schlegel and Hölderlin, Nietzsche turned to the past that he most revered, in his case to the “tragic age of the Greeks,” and refused to treat it anachronistically as merely “pre-Socratic,” he clearly did so (just like his Basel colleague and hero Burckhardt did in his much more detailed aesthetic-historical masterpieces) precisely not for the purpose of nostalgic lament, but with the manifest aim of trying to prod his own culture into a better sense of alternatives, a radical new way of feeling and thinking that could turn the post-1870 German-speaking lands into a forward-looking cosmopolitan community, appreciative of difference, rather than a backward-looking chauvinist military state.³¹ Similarly, like Nietzsche and other writers after the Historical Turn began, the

³⁰ At one point, Pippin (2015b, p. 114) echoes the Hegelian linking of Hölderlin and Schiller in this way, although he also notes (1991, p. 93) that a reading of Nietzsche as nostalgic would be improper. Hölderlin’s attitude should be distinguished from that of Schiller’s generation. As Larmore (2000, p. 150) notes, Hölderlin’s hero Hyperion, for example, sees “nostalgia for the past could never be his . . . he has to deal with the world of the present.”

³¹ Pippin understandably raises worries about the social dimension of Nietzsche’s philosophy, but he has a positive discussion (1997b, p. 329) of Nietzsche on the use and abuse of history. In general, Nietzsche’s critical engagement with Schopenhauer, Strauss, and Wagner then, and his influence, at least as a provocation, on figures as diverse as Yeats, Weber, Scheler, and others, shows that his ideas were as productively entangled as any philosopher’s then in the social dynamics of the age’s consciousness formation.

Early Romantic writers keenly appreciated the enormous challenge (which Rousseau and Kant had already noted) that the unprecedented prestige of modern science and “productive” bourgeois life presented for truly progressive culture. Their common goal was to acknowledge rather than deny the validity of revolutionary scientific progress but at the same time also warn that this distinctive prestigious accomplishment of the modern era does not by itself satisfy our deepest aspirations – although it does naturally generate the dangerous temptation to believe that this is the case. To hold to this naive belief is to remain stuck in the *merely modern* era, a world in which human subjectivity alienates itself by imagining that science’s theoretical success provides the model for all basic human capacities, as well as for the development of philosophy.

The Early Romantics were *late* modern insofar as they aimed, in an explicitly non-imperialist fashion, to get beyond this specific alienation, the sickness peculiar to the modern era. At the same time, they were still modern insofar as they valued science and did not just turn against the obsessions of the “merely modern” but saw the need to provide positive new models for the future. One might think that adequate versions of these models can be found in reminders of any familiar heroes, even long ancient, who clearly display eternally valid and relevantly imitable virtues. Given their progressive universalist orientation, the Romantics did not need to deny that there is a value to such heroes. However, given their intensified Faustian/Kantian experience of learning the frustrating limitations of even the finest intellect alone,³² the Romantic writers appreciated the need for finding exemplars directly relevant to the peculiarity of the late modern situation, the situation of feeling the disenchantment that occurs with the sense that exact science is replacing theology as the paradigm of *scientia* but without, on reflection, a way of satisfying the other basic needs of human subjectivity. A presentiment of this need can be found in Kant’s admiration of Milton’s genius, his dramatic manner of depicting the difficult struggle of free agents tempted but not satisfied by theoretical knowledge alone. Similar sentiments can be found in Hölderlin’s display of the limitations of Empedocles’s imperialist attempts to control others through special knowledge of nature.³³

A problem that arises with the tactic of referring to individual heroes in this way is that matters can appear to remain still as if one is acting in a kind of historical vacuum, simply calling on arbitrary “skyhooks” to lift oneself out of one’s own benighted time. The actual historical procedure

³² See Pippin 1991, p. 116 on how “self-consciousness begins to undermine rather than to realize autonomous reflection.”

³³ On Milton and Kant, as well as Empedocles and Hölderlin, see Ameriks 2012.

of the Early Romantics is much more complicated than this, for it is distinctively expressed in a revolutionary sequential consideration of the genesis of the late modern condition.³⁴ Schlegel, Hölderlin, and Novalis are concerned with not just the ancients but the *full sequence* of critical exemplars since then, that is, with the genealogy of ever more reflexive understandings of humanity's tragic discontent with itself, even with – or largely because of – its considerable cognitive capacities: hence Schlegel's path-breaking obsession with the history of world literature; Novalis's highlighting of the in-between period of the Middle Ages and its utopian fables; the romantic Schelling's innovative treatments of Dante, Bruno, and Cervantes; and Hölderlin's poems dedicated not only to Socrates, Diotima, and Alcibiades but also to later revolutionary "strangers" – Mary, Columbus, Kepler, Rousseau, Sinclair. These writers all think in terms of a multistage, collaborative project that rivals, in intention, the way that Hegel's *Phenomenology* traces, with seven-league boots, the development of Western spirit throughout an exhaustive pathway of philosophically defined cultural attitudes, from the first masters and slaves, and Greece onward, with special attention eventually to the complexities of the Kantian-Fichtean-"Romantic" positions of the Jena era.

Real Differences

At this point, one may still wonder how the Romantic late modern approach, with its emphasis on the subjective, aesthetic, and historical, differs from the straightforwardly rational project of neo-Hegelian dialecticians who regard philosophy as an account of "one's own time comprehended in thought" (PR §21)³⁵ – with the proviso that now this "own time" includes the conceptual results of all previous basic developments. Moreover, insofar as some of these dialecticians are highly pragmatic and regard Hegelian idealism as consistent with an open-ended rethinking and modifying of even our best conceptual frameworks up to now,³⁶ rather than a celebrating of the achievement of an in principle final satisfaction and reconciliation of subjectivity in modernity, the contrast with what I have called the Romantic late modern attitude may seem incidental. Nonetheless, some basic differences remain, differences that

³⁴ Cf. Pippin 1991, p. 44: "modernist sensibilities depend quite concretely on a kind of 'reading' of their respective predecessors."

³⁵ Cf. Pippin 1991, p. 183 n. 44.

³⁶ See Pippin 1991, pp. 75f.: "reconciliation isn't once and for all," and there is "no Hegelian guarantee or determined necessity that human history is progressive." (Not even a retrospective one?) A less controversial point is Pippin's claim (1991, p. 154) that a Hegelian analysis implies current modernity itself is "negative," and so "reconciliation" with modernity is hardly absorption in a seamless whole.

can be highlighted through a brief characterization of some aspects of Hölderlin's work.

The most obvious difference has to do with the fact that, despite a few brief and complex instances of philosophical prose, Hölderlin especially – like Dante and Milton – clothes his sequential account basically in non-prosaic form. In doing so, he and the other Early Romantics (such as the English poets Blake and Shelley, and later figures such as Baudelaire, Yeats, and Rilke too) self-consciously take on a prophetic role, albeit a very self-critical one, and they properly see themselves as successors to the previous most influential voices in the Western cultural tradition, scriptural and secular. These exemplary writers aim not only to most vividly characterize the crises of their era and earlier stages but also to have a public effect in changing human sensibility in a more progressive direction. One might, of course, worry that such a procedure can lead to a kind of proto-fascist aesthetic “elitism.”³⁷ However, precisely because the Early Romantics explicitly present their writing in terms of a poetic and ever-ongoing and inclusive self-correcting process (“in touch with philosophy and rhetoric” and in “essence” “still in a process of becoming”³⁸), one acutely appreciative of Kant's stress on the general limits of human theoretical claims and the seriousness of universal rational obligations, their work is easily distinguishable from the fanaticism and relativism of later aesthetes. It is true that the “argument” of their dense writings remains so rich and polysemous that any attempt at a full conceptual clarification leads to controversy and a deep sense of incompleteness – but this is also true of interpretive reactions to the complex systematic masterpieces of German Idealism and other late modern philosophies. What is special about the overt poetic and all at

³⁷ Pippin 1991, p. 111 and 2015b, p. 150. Pippin links the danger of elitism specifically with Nietzsche's stress on the aesthetic and his allegedly weak conception of the dialectical aspects of society. Pippin also suggests that, in Nietzsche's famous story of the madman who announces the death of God, there is a “fantasy of a bloody murder with a knife” (1999, p. 149) that is a sign of the madman's hysterical melancholic state in contrast to Nietzsche's own more sober reaction to the event. But although Nietzsche certainly cannot be directly identified with the madman, the death of God is described as occurring through an internal process, whereby humanity fashions its own “knife,” and this does correspond to what Nietzsche himself says, at the very end of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, about how “all great things perish of their own accord.” All this is very much in line with Nietzsche's own dialectical analysis of key social events, such as his account of the “death” of ancient tragedy as due to “suicide,” and his multistage description in the section of the *Twilight of the Idols* concerning the self-undermining pattern of “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable.” Although it cannot be denied that Nietzsche's aesthetic elitism colored his whole philosophy, it is worth bearing in mind that one can be an “elitist” in recognizing geniuses within the aesthetic realm, as Kant and the Early Romantics did, without being objectionably elitist in morals.

³⁸ Schlegel 1991, #116.

once subjective, aesthetic, and historical orientation of their late modern writing is that it does not fall back into non-conceptual blindness but deftly exploits the special nature of literary language. Such language allows for a maximal influence on human beings because, in the hands of true geniuses, it most effectively combines conceptual with non-conceptual means for stimulating social memory formation and community development.³⁹ In this way, their literary writings have become “words with power,”⁴⁰ exploiting the ideal vehicle for immediately and also enduringly affecting social consciousness. On practically all accounts – from Kant and Schiller through Heidegger and Adorno – poetry, in its broad Romantic sense, is recognized as precisely the medium that is the obvious traditional one most needed to connect with, and stimulate, the potential of late modern subjects and societies in a way in which they have the best chance to genuinely recognize and begin to develop themselves – however systematically philosophers might then retrospectively try to characterize this process in more abstract terms.

Aside from encouragements of fanaticism, the other danger in the approach of Early Romanticism that seems to most worry its Hegelian critics is that poetic-prophetic writing can tend to dwell on “tragic” general circumstances of the human situation in a way that leads to an abstract, unenlightening obsession with the basic finitude of humanity, and a desperate orientation to an unrealistic hope for some kind of “redemption,” an orientation that supposedly overlooks the concrete social factors behind the particular evils and alienating structures of modern life.⁴¹ This worry is understandable but can be met with a division of labor. Some writing about social problems and individual evil can and should highlight the specifics of individual situations. But attention to these specifics – whether through philosophy, sociology, political action, or “realistic” art – need not conflict with exercise of the basic human capacity to symbolically express what appear to be universal motifs and transcendental structures of the human situation, such as the general notions of spontaneity and identity, theoretical and practical, or the ideal of mutual recognition and an “eros for justice.”⁴² The literary creations of the Romantics, like those of their exemplary predecessors and successors, dwell in an especially effective way on these universal motifs, for example, the theme of “temporalization,” or of balancing responsiveness and creativity.⁴³ All this is compatible with, and complements, their deep interest in social analysis

³⁹ See Assmann 2011, pp. 71 and 80, which refers specifically to Hölderlin in this context.

⁴⁰ Frye 1990. ⁴¹ See Pippin 1991, p. 165; 1997b, p. 411; 2005b, p. 77.

⁴² Cf. Pippin 1997b, p. 329 on this concern in Nietzsche.

⁴³ See Larmore 1996, pp. 24–31.

and activism, just as the universal themes of Hegel's *Logic* cohere with his early work on Scottish economics and Swiss property relations. More generally, the concern with what is called "redemption,"⁴⁴ especially for these Romantics, does not involve an offensive interest in scapegoats or an escapist downplaying of natural experiences but instead discloses, as in Schleiermacher's stress on modern sites of "free sociability," an interest in exhibiting, as Novalis says, in his "Kant-Studien," an "alternating elevation and lowering" that reveals how the "ordinary" can have a "higher meaning" and the "higher and infinite" can "become common expressions."⁴⁵

Any current defense of these Early Romantic authors presupposes, of course, that there remains, in our *late late* modernity, a significant literate audience that has a chance to hear, and then an uncorrupted desire to listen to, voices like theirs. Philosophers cannot of themselves create that audience or substitute for these poetic writers, but their critical work, ever since the epochal regenerating efforts of scholars such as Dilthey, Henrich, Frank, Marion, and others, does seem to have created a continuing chance for these writers to have more of a hearing than even they may have expected. All the more reason to keep defending the distinctive potential of the first seers of late modernity in the face of more prosaic – or extreme – alternatives.

⁴⁴ Pippin repeatedly expresses worries about "romantic monism" (1991, p. 66) and concerns with "redemption" (1999, p. 156).

⁴⁵ Novalis 1960, II:545, #105, as translated in Kneller 2003, p. xxxiii.

Part III

Hegel and After

9 Autonomy and Liberation: The Historicity of Freedom

Christoph Menke

Modern philosophy begins – at the same time as the political revolution – with the introduction of the concept of “autonomy.” The core of the concept of autonomy consists in conceiving the binding quality of laws together with the freedom of the subject submitted to these laws. Jerome Schneewind has shown how deep the break is not only with the tradition of classical natural rights, but also – perhaps above all – with that of modern natural rights (Schneewind 1998). While modern philosophy often sees law and freedom as being in opposition – the law is imposed, freedom is lawless – the concept of autonomy wants to determine law and freedom reciprocally. Autonomy means on the one hand to understand the law in such a way that in subjection to the law, one “obeys only oneself and remains as free as before” (Rousseau 1997, pp. 49f.). On the other hand, it means to understand freedom as leaving behind the “slavery” of “mere appetite,” to become the “master of oneself” in “obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself” (Rousseau 1997, p. 54). Being free means following the law. In turn, something is only a law (in the normative sense: a reason for acting) when following it means being free. Free willing [*freies Wollen*] and binding obligation [*verpflichtendes Sollen*] coincide.

If one takes Rousseau’s talk about self-legislation literally, this concept leads to a contradiction that has been described as the “paradox of autonomy” (Pinkard 2002, pp. 59, 226). If freedom is supposed to consist in obedience to a self-given law, how is the act of legislation, the act of putting the law into effect, to be understood? Is it an act of obedience to a non-self-given law and thus unfree, or an act of arbitrary free choice and thus lawless? Clearly, neither of these satisfies autonomy’s claim to join law and freedom. Both are forms of heteronomy: the external heteronomy of imposed laws or the internal heteronomy of merely arbitrary decisions. Taken literally, the idea of autonomy is paradoxical; its ground is heteronomy.

Hegel's theory of ethical life can be read as the attempt to resolve this paradox through understanding the subject of autonomy as a participant in social practices. Freedom and law are therein reciprocally bound to each other, as moments of the fundamental relation described as participation by subjects in a social practice. "Ethical life" means that subject and practice are to be grasped as two reciprocally constituted elements of a "living" context or relation, in which freedom of the subject and the laws of practice are actualized at one and the same time.

Robert Pippin has termed such an understanding of Hegel's theory of ethical life "left-Hegelian" (Pippin 2008a, p. 58).¹ Left-Hegelianism is the notion that Hegel's theory of ethical life aims to explain the idea of autonomy so that its paradox can be resolved. Left-Hegelianism thus reads Hegel from a decidedly modern perspective: as an answer to the central problem of modernity, that is, how freedom and the law can be thought of together. The left-Hegelian interpretation claims that this can succeed only when autonomy is thought as a form of social participation. To do this, however, means at the same time to think of social participation as essentially processual and temporal, and thus *historical*. Following the left-Hegelian thesis, the thought of historicity is the solution to the paradox of autonomy. Only by taking this step can modern philosophy solve its systematic fundamental problem.

In what follows, I first retrace the left-Hegelian argument (I). Then, in a series of theses, I sketch the limits of this interpretation, that is, why we must still (or once again) go beyond left-Hegelianism (II). The reason for this lies in its understanding of the historical process: Left-Hegelianism thinks of history as the self-production of autonomy. But the production of autonomy contains an irreducibly heteronomous moment: It is referred to as an act of liberation that itself is not an autonomous action. This is the step toward a materialist or genealogical understanding of the becoming of autonomy as seen in Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. They understand history not as the self-production of autonomy but rather as a struggle for liberation in which power opposes power.

I

The key to resolving the paradox of autonomy lies in the manner in which its two elements, the self and the law, are connected. Rousseau understands this connection legislatively: In freedom, the self gives itself the law. This understanding leads to the problem mentioned earlier, that is,

¹ On the systematic distinction between left- and right-Hegelianism, see Habermas 1987, pp. 51–5. For a historical characterization, see the introduction to Löwith 1962, pp. 7–38.

that the self must either precede the law (in which case it cannot act bindingly) or it must be under the law (and thus not free). Kant concludes that the link between self and law meant to guarantee freedom must be explained in another way. The law in obeying which I am free is not the law that I have given myself, but rather the law that I *am* myself. The autonomous law is one's own law: the law that constitutes the self. Autonomous judgment or action does not consist in producing a law oneself, but rather in bringing one's *own* law to expression; put differently, autonomy must be understood "expressively."²

Kant's new expressivist interpretation of the concept of autonomy is the foundation of Hegel's theory of ethical life. A law can be binding for the subject only when it is a law that the subject already has or that constitutes the subject; the autonomous law is not instituted. At the same time, Hegel objects that Kant did not understand how the subject must be thought such that this idea could work. Hegel's way of putting this is to say that the subject should not be understood as "moral." A moral subject is one that understands its own laws – that is, those constituting it as subject – as formally defined criteria of rationality, which it then applies to pre-given determinations. Such a subject is not capable of coming to a judgment or a decision; it cannot answer the practical question "what is duty?" (PR §134). Any determination here can only be some material taken up "from outside" and is therefore heteronomous (PR §135). Thus, one must break with Kant's "moral" concept of the subject to do right by his expressivistic interpretation of autonomy. This happens for Hegel in the move from "morality" to "ethical life." In what follows, I reconstruct this move by showing how the concepts of social praxis (1) and its subjective appropriation (2) bring forth the thought of history (3).

1 Hegel's fundamental move consists in understanding the autonomous subject as a part or "member" of a "world." This "world," in which alone the subject can be autonomous, is a moment of the "living good." The good "lives" when it "is actual" in actions (PR §141 N). The world of which the autonomous subject is a component is thus a world of practical actualizations of the good. More precisely, it consists in a plurality of contexts of actions that are defined, structured, and delimited from each other as actualizations of specific goods. Such contexts of action can be called "practices."³ The fundamental thesis of Hegel's theory of ethical life says that only in a world of practices can the subject be autonomous.

² Following Pinkard 2007, p. 210, which refers to Taylor 1975, pp. 13ff.

³ See MacIntyre 2007, ch. 14. On the following, see Pinkard 2001 and 2004.

Practices are the basic unity of the practical: everything practical – purposes, means, reasons, norms, actions, subjects, successes, and achievements – only exists within practices. The fundamental practical relation is consequently that of being part of or participating in a practice. A purpose, a means, a reason, an action, a subject, a success, or something's being good means having a specific role or "status" in a practice.⁴ The possibility of practical judgments is likewise founded in this relation of being a part or participating: Something is the object of a judgment insofar as it is part of a practice. And somebody may make a judgment insofar as she is a participant in a practice. To pass judgment on something that is a part of a practice means to measure it against the law that constitutes the practice and thus defines it as a part of this practice in the first place. And anyone who judges, being a participant in a practice, refers to just that law that constitutes her as well as that which is judged: In passing judgment on something according to *its* own law, she follows *her* own law; these laws are identical.

As such, the one moment of the "living good," the "world" as an ensemble of practices, already includes the other moment: the subject as participant in practices. The "living good" is the law that has become "the existing world and the nature of self-consciousness" (PR §142). It is "objectively" or "externally" present in social practices and "subjectively" or "internally" present in the self-consciousness of its participants. Only when the subject is conceived as a moment in the living "unity of the inner and the outer" (PR §141 N), the fundamental practical relation of participation, does it have its own law, which furnishes it grounds for judgments. Only then *is* it a subject – an agent who acts on the basis of grounds or reasons: "No one can be said to have any sort of effective, practical reason to do anything if conceived just as a purely rational self-determining agent." For it is "only qua participant that I can be said to have practical reasons at all" (Pippin 2008a, pp. 263, 247). The link between freedom and law that defines the concept of autonomy finds its justification in the practical relation of participating in a practice.

The problem that, according to Hegel, Kant was incapable of resolving thereby disappears. The determination of action is autonomous when it is grounded solely in the subject's own law, which is the law of the practice in which it participates. As a participant in a practice, the subject is constituted through just those laws that constitute this practice. These laws are, first, *determinate* laws; they articulate the good that defines the respective practice. A practice "in general" exists just as little as the good "as such"; there are only practices and goods. And the laws constituting a

⁴ This is Pippin's fundamental hypothesis: see Pippin 2008a, pp. 97ff.

practice and therewith the participating subjects are, second, always already *actualized*, applied, or complied with. The normativity that they ground is immanent: not establishing an opposition between norm and reality but between two realities, that is, between a good and a bad actualization of the law that constitutes the respective practice. To act autonomously means therefore to actualize what is already actual in the social practice in which the subject participates. One knows how one ought to act when one knows how others have already acted. A participating subject's own law, the "nature" of its "self-consciousness," is nothing other than the law of the "present world."

2 However, does Hegel's argument not do away with both Kant's unresolved problem of the determination of the good and, at the same time, the autonomy of this determination? "Autonomy" does not mean merely that the will follows its own law but rather that the *rational* will follows *its* own law. Autonomy as self-actualization does not mean that in its willing the subject expresses just any identity as a participant in this or that practice but rather expresses her identity as a rational subject.

This objection is correct and yet also poses a false alternative: The subject expresses her identity as a rational subject only *in* (the manner and mode of) her participation in this or that practice. The identity of the subject as participant in this or that practice is not then also confronted, externally, with demands of rationality that express its identity as a rational subject. Rather, participation in a practice is already internally determined by the demand for reason; practical reason is immanent to practical participation. To participate in a practice means to govern oneself through judgments – judgments that can only be grounded in one's own laws. The subject's own laws, which constitute the "nature of its self-consciousness" by participating in a practical "world," are therefore for this subject the reasons of its judgment. That something *is* a reason cannot be understood, however, independently of a subject accepting it as a reason. (This insight of the stance Hegel calls "morality" holds also for the Hegelian stance of "ethical life.") Ascertaining that something is a reason is an act of a subject recognizing it *as* a reason. The concept of a reason therefore already implies the concept of a subject entitled to decide whether it is a reason and thus worthy of recognition: "The *right of the subjective will* is that whatever it is to recognize as valid should be *perceived* by it *as good*" (PR §132). And "the right to recognize nothing that I do not perceive as rational is the highest right of the subject" (PR §132 A). Now, this right need not be understood as "moral," as the right to testing according to formally defined criteria of rationality. Instead, the right of the subject, "that my insight into an obligation should be based

on *good reasons*" (PR §132 A), is actualized only in its participation in practices. The (Kantian) alternative – that the subject does not express just any identity as a participant in this or that practice but rather its identity as a rational subject – is false: To be a participant in a practice already *means* to actualize one's identity as a rational subject – for to be a participant in a practice means nothing less than to recognize its laws as reasons. This is the "ethical" and thus the only true practical realization of the "morally" asserted right of the subject.

Consequently, Hegel describes the subject's participation in a practice at the same time as the appropriation of this practice by the subject: "The right of individuals to their subjective determination to freedom is fulfilled insofar as they belong to ethical actuality; for . . . it is in the ethical realm that they *actually* possess *their own* essence" (PR §153). The constitutive laws of a practice "are not something *alien* to the subject. On the contrary, the subject bears *spiritual witness* to them as to *its own essence*" (PR §147).⁵ The subject bears witness to the laws of a practice as its own. That they are its own is thus not a fact [*Tatsache*] that could be ascertained, nor the product of an action [*Tathandlung*] that the subject carries out free of any reasons. The constitutive laws of a practice are rather the subject's own laws only in *becoming* the subject's own laws – in being appropriated by the subject. Put differently: The subject has only those laws for its own "essence" or for its own "nature" that it has appropriated through participation in practices.

The appropriation of the laws of a practice by a subject thus means nothing other than the recognition of these laws as reasons; only then is autonomous action – action proceeding strictly out of one's own law – possible. In appropriating a social practice, the subject reproduces it as a context of laws that it can recognize as reasons. This is what Hegel's concept of "Spirit" aims to describe: "Spirit" is the shape a practice takes when it is reproduced as a rational context of normative concepts through the autonomous action of a subject. Without the subjective appropriation of a practice, through which its laws can be recognized as reasons, there is thus no Spirit. Spirit "is substance made *concrete* by subjectivity as *infinite form*" (PR §144). To say that the appropriating reproduction of a social practice as a shape of Spirit has an essentially reflexive character is merely another way of saying the same thing. To appropriate a practice means to recognize its laws as reasons, or to reproduce it as a rational context of reasons – as Spirit.

⁵ This is the determination of freedom as "self-presence in the other" [*Bei-sich-selbst-sein-im-Anderen*]; see PR §7. On this, see Honneth 2001, ch. 1.

The act of recognition through which something takes on the shape of a reason is an operation of reflection. This operation nonetheless occurs only in practical participation itself. It is therefore not to be understood as testing the validity of a maxim on pre-given, general, formally defined criteria of rationality. Instead, the reflection acquires the criteria against which it measures the validity of something solely from that on which it reflects and the validity of which it tests. The act of recognizing something as a reason is the productive, creative act of bringing forth the criteria for judgments, out of that which is to be judged itself. The appropriation of a practice makes this practice into its own measure. The reflexive appropriation of a practice is at once immanent and dividing: It opens up *within* the practice the normative difference between the object and the measure of judgment. The appropriation of a practice is reflexive, because recognizing its laws as reasons always already means articulating them in such a way that the viewpoints according to which the laws deserve recognition as reasons become clear. As reflexive, the appropriation of a practice therefore *is* a practice of reason and makes the appropriated practice *into* a practice of reason.

Because the subject has and acts on its own laws – is autonomous – only through its participation in social practices, the autonomy of the subject depends on whether the “given world” is a world of practices whose laws can be appropriated as reasons. Practices of which that holds, in whose appropriation the autonomy of the subject is thus actualized, can themselves be called “autonomous” (Pippin 2008a, p. 103). The autonomy of the subject and the autonomy of the practices are thus two moments of the same process of appropriating participation. This irreducible double autonomy of subject *and* practice is Spirit.

3 Robert Pippin has called Hegel’s link between practice and subject an “unambiguously neo-Aristotelian” thought (Pippin 2008a, p. 58). It is neo-Aristotelian in understanding Spirit as a “second nature.” The spiritual capacities of the subject are capacities for participation in social practices and formed through participation in social practices. The spiritual capacities of the subject are a “cultural product”; as such, they are its *second* nature. However, they are its *second nature*, since they constitute its “essence”: “one’s nature as one has become.”⁶

Equally important for Pippin, however, is that Hegel’s explication of the link between subjective capacities and social practice fundamentally transforms this (neo-) Aristotelian thought. For Hegel conceives of this link between subject and practice so as to capture the specifically modern

⁶ McDowell 1998, pp. 194, 185.

idea of autonomy. Pippin terms this move beyond any mere neo-Aristotelianism (of any kind), left-Hegelian. It consists in understanding Spirit, that is, the simultaneous autonomy of practice and subject, as a “kind of historical-social achievement” (Pippin 2008a, p. 58).⁷ Spirit is not a telos of nature, its formation not a natural development; instead, it is the “product” of its self-production. Against the view that people are “free by nature,” Hegel objects that “The free Spirit consists precisely in not having its being as mere concept or in itself (see §21), but in overcoming [*aufheben*] this formal phase of its being and hence also its immediate natural existence, and in giving itself an existence which is purely its own and free” (PR §57A). To interpret Hegel in a left-Hegelian way means to take the first step of the Aristotelian concept of second nature but not the second. Spirit is second nature because it must be formed and as formed constitutes the essence of the subject. However, Spirit is not second nature in the sense that its formation is itself natural. Instead, the formation of Spirit is, as its self-production, *historical*.

“The production of Spirit” thus means production of its free existence, of the autonomous shape of the subject as well as that of social practices. Both exist only as simultaneous moments in the process of reflexively appropriating participation. In this process, Spirit and practice first become autonomous; more precisely, they are for the first time produced as autonomous. Because the process of appropriating participation is none other than that of the recognition of the laws of social practices as reasons, it cannot be a natural process – that would be a process whose steps and result are prefigured from the beginning by nature. There can be no natural determination of what counts as a reason, or of what counts as an act of its recognition. What a reason is and what an act of its recognition is (or what counts as such) constitute the concept of Spirit. However, the concept of Spirit can be determined through nothing other than itself. The becoming of Spirit and the becoming of the concept of Spirit coincide. What Spirit is, what counts as a reason and its recognition, is determined first and again and again in the becoming of Spirit itself. The becoming of Spirit is its self-production because it is the

⁷ On Pippin’s understanding, this contradicts not only *traditional* Aristotelianism, which links to the concept of “second nature” the view that the process of its formation is “the natural realization of a slumbering potential” and thus itself natural, but also the neo-Aristotelian concept of second nature. Those who speak of “second nature” in the sense that the “nature” of the subject is formed practically are also led to speak of “second nature” in the sense that the formation of the subject is naturally guided or preformed. This is part of the debate between Pippin and McDowell. See Pippin, “Leaving Nature Behind: Or Two Cheers for ‘Subjectivism,’” in Pippin 2005b; McDowell 2002; and “On Pippin’s Postscript” in McDowell 2009, pp. 185–203.

process of its self-determination: the determination of that which is called "Spirit."

The fundamental step of Hegel's reformulation of the concept of autonomy consists in understanding the subject as essentially *social*: the autonomy of the subject exists only in the process of participation in social practices, a process that takes place as the appropriation of this practice as a rational context; put otherwise, the autonomy of the subject exists only as a moment in that living context of social practice that Hegel calls "Spirit"; this context itself in turn is understood as essentially historical. For this context is no being, but rather a becoming; neither is it the development of a ("naturally") given goal, but rather the self-production of Spirit through the self-determination of its concept. Spirit is historical for it exists only in producing itself.

On Pippin's left-Hegelian interpretation, the historicity of Spirit is the central insight of Hegel's theory of ethical life. For it alone allows Hegel to think two thoughts together: the subject's determination as participant in social practices, and autonomy as the free, infinite form of subjectivity. The unity of these two thoughts consists in the processuality of the free appropriation of the social, which acquires its rational shape as an order of reasons only in this appropriation. At the same time, however, these two thoughts, which are connected by the concept of historicity themselves, have, according to Hegel, a historical (or historico-philosophical) place and content. The Aristotelian thought of social participation and the Rousseauian-Kantian idea of autonomy are the fundamental ideas of antiquity and modernity. The Hegelian thought of the historicity of Spirit, which unifies law and freedom, thus also unifies Aristotle and Kant, antiquity and modernity. In Hegel's thought of historicity resides at the same time the historicity of his thought.

II

The insight into the historicity of Spirit claims that its being is its becoming. The autonomy of Spirit is not a given state, nor is it one that was reached at some time. Instead, the autonomy of Spirit exists only by arising.

The left-Hegelian interpretation of the concept of Spirit explains the historicity of Spirit as an implication of the ethical-theoretical determination of autonomy. On this account, "autonomy" means simultaneously the autonomy of the subject and the autonomy of praxis. The autonomy of the subject consists in following only its own law as reason for action. The autonomy of a practice consists in its being a rational context of reasons. For the left-Hegelian, they are possible only in a reciprocal

relation: A subject has its own law as reason for action only in a practice, and a practice is a rational context of reasons only through subjects. Furthermore, this reciprocal relation between autonomous subject and autonomous practice only exists within a process of participation and appropriation: The subject first attains its own law by appropriating the practice; the practice first becomes a rational connection of reasons when the subject participates in it. As a result, the autonomy of the subject, like that of the practice, first *arises* through just that process of reflexive appropriation in which autonomy *consists*. Just as autonomy exists only in that it produces itself, so autonomy is already actualizing itself in arising. The left-Hegelian interpretation of the historicity of Spirit declares that autonomy is achieved through autonomy. The ground of autonomy is autonomy.

The step beyond left-Hegelianism consists in the thesis that Spirit cannot produce itself; the formation of the autonomous shape of Spirit is not the autonomous deed of Spirit. It correspondingly consists in another concept of history: the history in which Spirit achieves its autonomous shape is (and remains) prehistory; Spirit's becoming autonomous is not "spiritual."⁸ This step is already prepared in Hegel himself, insofar as he describes the becoming of autonomy as "liberation from nature" (1), and understands nature, from which Spirit liberates itself, as "second nature" (2). With this, however, the paradox that the theory of ethical life was meant to overcome returns.

1 Hegel's formulas for the process in which Spirit achieves its autonomy are "returning from nature," "sublation of externality," "the self-freeing [*Sichfreimachen*] of Spirit," "liberation [*Befreiung*],"⁹ or "formation" [*Bildung*]. Formation is the "hard work" of "liberation," which "work[s] to eliminate natural simplicity, whether as passive selflessness or as barbarism of knowledge and volition – i.e. to eliminate the immediacy and individuality [*Einzelheit*] in which Spirit is immersed" (PR §187A). The becoming of Spirit is its liberation from nature – "nature" designating the order of "externality" (EN §247). A natural interrelation of elements can thus not be appropriated by the subject as its own: "In this externality, the determinations of the concept have the appearance of *indifferent existence*

⁸ To understand the becoming of Spirit as its prehistory – one that extends into the present being of Spirit – is the basic move of a "genealogical" concept of Spirit. See Menke 2006 and 2013a, ch. 3.

⁹ See EG §§ 381, 381Z, 382Z. [Since the existing English translations of volumes 2 and 3 of *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* are somewhat dated, I have diverged from them where necessary.–Tr.] This determination is indifferent with respect to the distinction into different forms of Spirit. It therefore holds particularly for the two forms of finite Spirit, subjective and the objective.

and isolation with relation to each other; the concept thus exists as something inward. Nature consequently does not display any freedom in its existence but rather only *necessity* and *contingency*" (EN §248). The coming-to-be of Spirit, the acquisition of its autonomy, consists in replacing this external – and thereby unfree – interrelation of nature with modes of combination that the subject can recognize as rational. Spirit forms itself in distinguishing itself from nature, in and through overcoming the immediacy and externality of nature.

In this self-differentiation of Spirit from nature, Spirit and nature are not two ontologically distinct domains of being. Their distinction is rather "normative and historical" (Pippin 2008a, p. 61): the distinction of "two ways of treating something" (Brandom 1979, p. 192). Above all, however, the point of this distinction consists in expressing the adequate self-understanding of Spirit. Spirit first understands itself adequately only when it understands itself as being distinct from a natural mode of interrelation, that is, when it understands that spiritual activities or performances [*Vollzüge*] are *constituted* differently from natural ones. And only when Spirit understands itself in this way as distinct from nature are its performances truly spiritual and distinct from nature: "The whole development of the concept of Spirit presents only Spirit freeing itself from all those forms of its existence which do not correspond to its concept: a liberation which comes about through these forms being re-shaped into an actuality completely appropriate to the concept of Spirit" (EG §382Z). The liberation of Spirit from nature consists in the self-production of a constitution distinct from nature, by understanding itself as distinct from nature.

Hegel's interpretation of the liberation of Spirit from nature is distinct from a moral reading of this formula. In its moral sense, the liberation from nature means that the subject breaks the power of determination that its natural impulses – instincts, needs, feelings – have over its will. Morally understood, the liberation of Spirit from nature means transforming oneself from a needs-determined "wanton" (Frankfurt 1988) into a subject with its own will. Hegel on the other hand understands the liberation of Spirit not as a break with the external power of natural determinations but rather as Spirit's overcoming of its own *naturalistic constitution*.

To describe this, Hegel takes up the Aristotelian concept of "second nature" and gives it a fundamentally new turn. That a subject has "naturally determined being" means that its will is governed by naturally *pre-given* determinations. "Natural constitution" of Spirit, on the other hand, means that Spirit is *in itself* naturalistic. In becoming autonomous, Spirit liberates itself from a kind of unfreedom. This unfreedom does not consist

in Spirit being externally determined by nature, but rather in Spirit appearing *like* or *as* nature: The unfree Spirit is the one that is topsy-turvy in nature. Hegel thus allows the concept of “second nature” to become, in contrast to the Aristotelian tradition, a critical concept; this is the sense in which it lies at the basis of Marx’s analysis of the fetish-character of the commodity, of Lukács’s theory of reification, and Benjamin’s talk about the “mythical.”¹⁰ “Second nature” in the critical sense does not mean the determination of Spirit by nature, but rather the “repetition of nature” in Spirit (Horkheimer & Adorno 2002, p. 16; cf. Menke 2013b). Consequently, the liberation of Spirit from nature also does not mean making the will independent of causally determining factors. Instead, the liberation of Spirit consists in breaking the appearance of necessity and unavoidability with which the elements and combinations of social practices confront subjects. The deed of liberation consists in this act of liberation, the breach by which Spirit acquires autonomy.

As a result, the first step beyond Kant’s moral concept of the subject must be followed by a second one. Not only the (Kantian) moral understanding of autonomy, but also the moral concept of nature must be revised. The first step beyond the moral concept of the subject consists in understanding the idea of autonomy both socially and historically. The second step consists in understanding nature (from whose power Spirit frees itself) as the “second nature” of social practices produced through a topsy-turvy reversal [*Verkehrung*].

2 The introduction of the critical concept of second nature is the decisive move by which Hegel’s philosophy itself prepares the step beyond its interpretation by left-Hegelianism. With the concept of second nature, Hegel describes what Spirit must liberate itself from to achieve its autonomous shape: Spirit becomes autonomous in breaking through its own naturalistic constitution. At the same time, second nature is produced by Spirit. It is a form of Spirit *and* the Other opposite Spirit. This is what constitutes the antinomy of second nature as a posited immediacy.¹¹

One side of this antinomy consists in this: Second nature is a deficient shape of Spirit. This is formulated in Hegel’s theory of habit as follows:

¹⁰ On this tradition, see Adorno 1984b, esp. pp. 117ff.

¹¹ This is Hegel’s formulation for second nature in subjective Spirit, as habit, as can be seen in the quotation immediately following in the text. The concept of second nature is fundamental for both of the forms of Spirit that constitute it as finite: subjective and objective Spirit. In the following, I refer to both contexts, without expressly distinguishing between the two. The *mechanism* of habit is the subjective correlate of the *unconsciousness* of ethical reasons. See Peperzak 1995. On the theory of habit, see Merker 1990.

Although . . . Man is on the one hand free through habit [for through habit, Spirit comes to “inhabit” Man], on the other hand it makes him into its slave. And although it is not an *immediate, first* nature, dominated by the particularity of feelings but is rather a *second nature*, posited by the soul – it is nonetheless a *nature*, something posited which assumes the shape of something immediate, an *ideality* of the existing still burdened with the form of *being*, and thus something which does not correspond to free Spirit, something merely *anthropological*. (EG §410 Z)

Spirit as second nature is always still nature – not mere nature, but merely like nature. In habits, situations and actions (i.e., perceptions and judgments) are combined not rationally but rather “mechanically”: not through reasons but rather through naturalistic contexts of causes and effects. Further, habits are not linked rationally to the subjects whose second nature they form, that is, “not through reasons” (PR §147 N) – Hegel’s examples of habits are all fundamental activities, such as standing upright, seeing (as perceiving), and thinking (EG §410A). Subjects “cannot *account*” for these performances that belong to their second nature; they have “no *conscience*, no *conviction*” (PR §147 N). “[That’s the way] I *am*” says the subject in second nature; the “choice, the approval is posited as identical with me” (PR §147 N). In Spirit as second nature, subjects have an imaginary identity: They confuse becoming with being; they represent history as nature. To be sure, when Spirit has become habit and second nature, the “opposition of the natural and the subjective will is broken”; the spiritual has become natural. As a result, rational thought has a free path. But precisely for this reason, “once this is accomplished, their activity and vitality disappear, and the loss of interest which ensues is a mental or physical death” (PR §151Z). “Human beings even die as a result of habit” (ibid.). The second nature established by Spirit is the death of Spirit – “a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities” (Lukács 1971, p. 64).¹² Second nature means unfreedom.

This is one side of Hegel’s critical concept of second nature: Second nature is the deficient, external-immediate or “mechanical” shape of Spirit. The other side of Hegel’s post-Aristotelian concept of second nature, the other half of its antinomy, consists in thinking this deficiency as both necessary and non-sublatable. Spirit can never completely leave

¹² The difference between Hegel’s critical concept of second nature and the neo-Aristotelian concept of it lies in how they describe its uncontrollability: McDowell wants to use the concept of second nature to capture the way in which a (receptive) process can be both beyond our control and nonetheless able to be appropriated rationally and meaningfully (McDowell 2002, p. 274). This second condition does not hold for the critical description of second nature: Second nature is “like nature (first nature), it is determinable only as the embodiment of recognised but senseless necessities and therefore it is incomprehensible, unknowable in its real substance” (Lukács 1971, p. 62).

behind its unfree existence as second nature or habit (see EG §389A; Wolff 1992, p. 69).

This thesis is found in Hegel's philosophy in both places where he develops his theory of second nature: in the theories of objective and subjective Spirit. Spirit is in the thrall of nature insofar as it is "finite." More precisely, the necessity of its deficient shape as second nature holds for Spirit insofar as it is "something merely *anthropological*" (EG §410Z, quoted earlier), that is, insofar as it is human Spirit. In the theory of objective Spirit, Hegel clarifies this through reference to the specific constitution of reason in ethical life. That human Spirit is in the thrall of nature shows itself in the fact that "ethical man" remains "unconscious of himself" (PR §144 Z). Hegel argues that in ethical life, "the conscious proceeds from the unconscious, mediation from immediacy, and *always goes back to the place from which it emerged*" (PhG §460, my emphasis). It is written into the structure of ethical justification that its laws contain mere givenness that can never be overtaken by reflection. "That is how they *are* – that is how they *live*" (PR §147 N) is the information given in ethical life about the status of the final ground. For Hegel, ethical being is "naturalistic" at this final moment of justification because it indicates a givenness of the laws of social practices. This givenness cannot be recognized as a reason; it prevents the articulation of ethical practice as the articulation of a rational context of reasons. Ethical practices contain an indissoluble moment of second nature because they cannot achieve a completely autonomous shape in subjects' appropriating participation.

In Hegel's theory of ethical life, it remains unclear why this must be the case. The left-Hegelian interpretation has therefore seen a certain conservatism in Hegel's theory of ethical life as "second nature." Left-Hegelians believe that this conservatism can be criticized and overcome with the help of Hegel's own concept of Spirit. The concept of second nature is thus downgraded into expressing the "unavoidable tension between facticity and normativity." This tension "characterizes our subjectivity and intersubjectivity" because all explicit reflexive articulation is limited: It can direct itself only to the determinate, individual contents of social practices and must leave everything else at the level of pre-reflexive "background knowledge." With respect to this background knowledge, however, it should hold that "the appeal to 'this is simply what I do' cannot be understood as if it drew some sort of natural border for thought or as if it marked the limits of sense" (Pinkard 2004, pp. 279, 269, 270). The left-Hegelian objection to Hegel's ethical-theoretical concept of second nature thus claims that the naturalistic appearance of Spirit always appears only relatively. As such, its naturalistic quality is merely transitory: It is the mode of appearance for something that is not articulated

here and now but is in principle articulable. The left-Hegelian interpretation reduces the unconscious of ethical practices (which for Hegel makes these practices into second nature) into the (contingently) not-conscious of ethical reflection.

This left-Hegelian neutralization of the concept of second nature contradicts Hegel's justification for his thesis about the indissolvability of its externality. Hegel offers this argument in the course of his explicit reflections on the concept of the human. In Hegel's theory of subjective Spirit, his theory of second nature as "habit" is a part of anthropology. Here he claims that the reason that human Spirit is in the thrall of nature, that is, the reason why it necessarily takes on the deficient shape of second nature, is the corporeal existence of Man. Because *all* human performances are corporeal, "totally free thought, active in the pure element of itself" also requires "habit . . . It is first through this habit that I *exist* as thinking for myself as thinking. Even this immediacy of thinking self-presence [*Beisichsein*] contains bodiliness. (Lack of the habit and long continuation of thinking give one a headache.)" (EG §410Z). Hegel thus claims that Spirit does not exist contingently and hence surmountably in the deficient form of second nature, but rather necessarily and non-sublatably. This is the case because (or so long as) it exists in an entity that has a body.

Hegel's argument for this claim has the form of a genealogical argument. It begins with Hegel saying (with Aristotle) that in a corporeally existing being, Spirit takes on the shape of a soul or psyche. The Spirit that the person cultivates through the "hard work" of training and discipline is an "artwork of the soul" (EG §411) – a psychical work of art. As the talk of the "hard work" of cultural formation [*Bildung*] indicates, the soul can take on the shape of Spirit only in a confrontation with opposing forces. These forces constitute the inner nature of Man (or, more precisely, those that through this confrontation with the self-shaping form of Spirit become the inner nature of Man). The soul of Man is the scene of the struggle that opens up when the demands of spiritual capacities meet the impulses of inner nature. In this struggle, in the confrontation with the powers that determine Man at the "stage of his darkness" (EG §404), the demands of spiritual capacities can only take on the character of external compulsion. The first shape of Spirit in the human soul is second nature. It is the deficient anthropological form that Spirit necessarily first acquires when it is actualized in a being with an inner nature; Spirit emerges in the struggle against this inner nature's powers. This argument is genealogical because of its claim that Spirit never entirely leaves behind this first shape of second nature. The categorical difference between, on the one hand, Spirit and the "stage of its darkness" and on the other its subjective-social

autonomous shape never vanishes. Consequently, the possibility of a struggle between the two also never vanishes,¹³ nor does Spirit's naturalistic-external mode of appearance when confronted with the impulses of inner nature. Because there is no subject as the pure instance of spiritual capacities – that is, no moment in which the subject's natural powers do not reproduce themselves at the “stage of their darkness” – the subject reproduces in its actual performance over and over again the primal scene of its subjectivization, and in it, the appearance of Spirit as second nature.¹⁴

The genealogical argument of Hegel's anthropology sketched here (Spirit is essentially a countervailing power against inner nature) and the rational-theoretical argument in Hegel's theory of ethical life (Spirit is essentially unconscious) are two parallel attempts at unfolding the anti-nomy or the dialectic of second nature. Both treat second nature as a simultaneously deficient and necessary form of Spirit. The form of second nature is deficient in that it combines spiritual elements in an external and naturalistic manner: Second nature's forms of combination cannot be appropriated as autonomous performances deriving solely from reasons. If the subject's participation in social practices has the form of second nature, of “habit,” then neither the subject nor the practices can achieve an autonomous shape. At the same time, the form of second nature is necessary because it is reproduced through the autonomous performances of Spirit itself. Hegel's ethical-theoretical argument and Hegel's anthropological argument give two reasons for this. The ethical-theoretical argument claims that every attempt to reflexively articulate the autonomous shape of social practices as a context of reasons must at the same time make reference to this shape as mere habit, as a product of “natural history” and thus “natural determination.” Otherwise, its justifications would never end. Hegel's anthropological argument claims that every attempt to actualize the subject as a pure source of autonomous action – that is, one acting strictly out of its own law – must at the same time grant this law the external power habit possesses with respect to the forces of inner nature. Otherwise, these forces would drive the subject into insanity. Second nature is the other of Spirit that Spirit always and continuously

¹³ Hegel's evidence for this is that Spirit, “as *something natural* and *something existing* . . . is already capable of madness, of the finitude anchored within it” (EG §408Z). Spirit is free where it is “incapable of this sickness” (*ibid.*) – and thus not in the human being, not as an anthropological being. See Malabou 2005, part 1; Slavoj Žižek, “Discipline between Two Freedoms: Madness and Habit in German Idealism,” in Gabriel and Žižek 2009, pp. 95–121.

¹⁴ See the precise reconstruction of this Hegelian argument in Butler 1997, above all in the introduction, pp. 12ff. and ch. 1.

reproduces in itself. This constitutes Spirit's finitude: as always in the thrall of nature.

Through the concept of second nature, the paradox of autonomy reappears in Hegel's thought. Because both subject and practice acquire their autonomous shape simultaneously in Hegel's account of the subject's participation in practice, the paradox of autonomy is supposed to be overcome. But the concept of second nature claims that this same participation in practice necessarily produces the deficient form of Spirit. The subject's participation in practice never becomes a purely spiritual medium for its autonomy because it always remains "habit," a merely naturalistic mechanism. The laws that reciprocally constitute subject and practice in their relationship to each other are at once their own laws and laws of externality or naturalistic laws. Correspondingly, liberation from the naturalistic lawfulness that constitutes both subject and practice must itself be lawless. The liberation from the power of second nature first makes autonomy possible, but it is itself no act of autonomy. As the breaking of the naturalistic power of habitual mechanisms, the liberation of Spirit is no learning process. Liberation does not mean, as the left-Hegelians would have it, learning to be "more and more directed by and collectively responsible to, reasons" (Pippin 2008a, p. 60). Liberation is rather a struggle in which power directs itself against (an opposing) power. In the act of liberation, the imposed law of "habit" and the lawless freedom of arbitrary free choice stand in agonistic opposition; here we have heteronomy in both of its forms: external heteronomy (that of the law) and internal (that of arbitrary free choice).

The (left-) Hegelian concept of history makes two moves that remain fundamental for the genealogical counter-model as well. The first move consists in the conclusion that there is only one history: the history of freedom. In contrast to the concept of evolution, which is worked out by sociology and biology, the concept of history refers to processes of change only from the point of view of liberation. The second move consists in not taking freedom to be a natural quality of the human form of life, but rather to be a result – or more precisely, a product. Freedom exists only insofar as it is made. The (left-) Hegelian concept of history interprets the historical process of self-production as the appropriation of social practice. It makes freedom into the formal determination of the social. The genealogical objection rejects this solution to the paradox of autonomy, arguing that the solution is itself a paradox. For the social is – in irresolvable ambiguity – at the same time the medium *and* the other of freedom: In participation in the social, the subject wins *and* loses freedom. For this

reason, the historical process of liberation cannot consist in the ever more extensive, ever better appropriation of the social. The break with the social must also belong to liberation. The genealogical concept of history doubles the image of the progressive appropriation of the social through the counter-figure of the permanent, insurmountable struggle between two forces, irreconcilable and unrelenting.

10 Three, Not Two, Concepts of Liberty: A Proposal to Enlarge Our Moral Self-Understanding

Axel Honneth

Even among those of us who are not altogether convinced by Isaiah Berlin's famous essay "Two Concepts of Liberty" (Berlin 1969), it has become commonplace to adopt a distinction that largely coincides with the one he offered. On the one hand, we think that the culture of modernity adheres to a "negative" concept of freedom, which grants to the individual the widest possible sphere of protection from external intervention in the pursuit of purely personal interests. On the other hand, however, we are just as strongly convinced that individual freedom only truly exists when one orients one's actions according to reasons that one personally holds to be appropriate, and in this sense determines oneself. We sometimes adopt a distinction within this second, "positive" model of freedom between an "autonomous" and an "authentic" form of self-determination. This distinction serves to contrast individual action oriented according to moral norms and individual action oriented toward the realization of one's own nature and the most individually experienced needs.¹ But such a differentiation nonetheless largely conforms to the more fundamental classification of our freedom into negative and positive variants. In the following, I argue that this bifurcation of the concept of freedom, which has developed under Berlin's influence, is incomplete in a significant respect. The two models foreclose the possibility that the intentions of an agent can only be formed in reciprocal interaction between multiple subjects and thus can be realized without coercion only by acting together. This idea cannot be captured by the now commonplace notion that individual freedom consists in the realization of one's own already existing or reflexively achieved intentions. Rather the realization of freedom should itself be thought of as a cooperative process;

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¹ On this distinction, see Menke 1996, ch. 4; and Taylor 1992, p. 28.

only in the course of this process does it become clear which intentions should be realized.

I proceed first by illustrating with some well-known examples how we must understand such a form of cooperatively realized freedom. This first step should demonstrate that we have experience with this third category of “freedom” in our everyday lives, but that we lack the language to identify such experiences as a form of “freedom” (I). In the second part, I recall briefly the philosophical tradition in which this idea of “social freedom,” as I would like to call it, has always had a central place. Thus I hope to reveal that the aforementioned examples from our everyday life have already been associated by some political philosophers with a third, separate category of freedom (II). Only in the last part do I delve into the systematic question of whether the model of freedom that I have suggested by example in fact designates a third concept, which does not conform to the traditional bifurcated understanding. Here my purpose is not only to describe the respects in which social freedom is distinct from the other two models of freedom but also to explain why we cannot abandon this third concept in our self-understanding (III).²

I

I begin with an example from our political everyday life in which the exercise of freedom should be easily recognizable. Consider our regular or only occasional participation in processes of democratic will-formation when we join political discussions, call for protests, sign petitions, or merely distribute leaflets at demonstrations. What is immediately obvious about such actions is how difficult or even impossible it is to describe them with the traditional category of negative freedom, although we quite obviously perceive such cases as exercises of individual freedom. To be sure, in making political statements of this kind, we make use of a space that is legally protected from governmental interference, which allows us to proclaim our beliefs freely and without fear of coercion. But it is fairly misleading to think of the author of such opinions only as an isolated “I,” separated from all others, in the way the negative model of freedom suggests. So too is it misguided to think that the action is already completed with the proclamation, and thus that the expression of an opinion is

² In the following, I do not take up the important question of whether the outlined concept of social freedom should also have metaphysical priority over the two other concepts of freedom, which Berlin has differentiated – a claim Hegel certainly defended. Instead I am restricting myself here to the conceptual question whether such a concept of social freedom represents an independent value for our evaluative self-understanding. For a defense of the stronger claim, see Honneth 2014, pp. 42–6.

the final step in the exercise of freedom. The political belief that is expressed in public statements would be in some sense falsely understood if it were ascribed to the private resolution of the will of a solitary acting subject. The determination of the individual will would then be undertaken purely monologically and directed toward a merely private realization of its content. This understanding of political expression fails to capture its true dynamics. When the subject contributes to political discourse, she refers in her expression to a chain of earlier statements, which she attempts to correct or improve, such that she can only appropriately be understood as a member of a previously constituted, self-reflexively given, and already present “We.” This means that the exercise of the “free” action cannot be regarded as complete with the mere proclamation of her belief. For what the individual proposal aims at, and where it finds completion, is in the reaction of the addressed “We,” or of its individual representatives, who once again attempt to correct or improve upon the beliefs of other participants with their own. This description suggests that the participants in democratic will-formation must be able to understand their respective statements of opinion as intertwining with one another in such a way that they cannot avoid assuming a “We” that they together sustain through their contributions.

Although we obviously have the tendency to interpret participation in democratic will-formation as an exercise of individual freedom, such freedom cannot readily be described as an exercise of merely negative freedom.³ This is because the three distinguishing elements of negative freedom have little plausible application to such cases. The actor cannot be represented as a private subject who formulates the intentions of his actions by himself; nor is he “free” in carrying out his action only when other actors do not “arbitrarily” interfere; and finally his action is not complete as an exercise of freedom with the expression of his own opinion, but rather only temporally concludes if the other participants have reacted to it in a rationally comprehensible fashion. The actions of my fellow citizens therefore do not place an obstacle to my own free political act, nor do they merely constitute the conditions of its possibility. Rather their actions are so intrinsically interwoven with mine that it is difficult to speak of an individual act at all. It therefore seems that we can only realize this democratic freedom through a collaborative process, in which we understand our individual expressions of opinion as complementary contributions to a common project of identifying a common will.⁴

³ For a similar approach, see Crick 1969, pp. 194–214.

⁴ See Anderson 2006, pp. 8–22. The British neo-Hegelian Bernard Bosanquet put forward a magnificent proposal with the same intent more than a century ago (Bosanquet 1894).

One reason why this “intersubjective” or “cooperative” structure of political freedom so easily falls out of view may be that we usually think of voting as the standard case of democratic participation. Thus it can seem as though freedom consists in the singular and secluded act of forming a private opinion about one’s own preferences, and of secretly recording it without the influence of arbitrary intervention. This picture of democratic action falsely takes the part for the whole. John Dewey famously railed against this view because he saw that it masked the essential participatory element of democracy (Dewey 1969). A myopic focus on voting fails to recognize that the casting of the ballot is preceded by public discussion, including open media coverage and thus the process of reciprocal influence. Such deliberative discussions are a constitutive rather than merely an incidental feature of democracy (Anderson 2006). Taken in isolation, the casting of the ballot itself can perhaps be thought of according to the model of negative liberty. But this act is only a snapshot of a much more comprehensive process, which is meant to ensure that through appropriate instruments for the exchange of experience and opinion, individual beliefs are not only aggregated but are as far as possible bound together into a rational “general will.” Even when such an agreement concerning the common good cannot be reached because starkly divergent views predominate, the resulting conflict over the better interpretation of the general welfare must be described as a cooperative process. Whoever participates in these consensual or conflictual processes of identifying the public will can no longer imagine the related experiences of freedom and the absence of coercion according to the standard of implementing private interests with the least possible interference. To be able to formulate one’s own intentions, one must be able to take up the perspective of others and accept their potential corrective power. In this way, democratic will-formation can be understood as a cooperative undertaking that serves the search for the common good.

So as not to create the misleading impression that only democratic will-formation resists description as an exercise of purely negative freedom, I want to give another well-known example from our everyday lives, which, despite its many distinguishing features, shares several common elements with political participation. Personal relationships of friendship and love may also be interpreted as exercises of freedom on the basis of their non-coercive quality and the attendant loosening of the boundaries of the self, but they resist description by the standard of the undisturbed realization of privately determined intentions. Even the first premise of a negative conception of freedom does not plausibly apply to this case: Someone who is maintaining a sincere friendship or romantic relationship will understand his actions within this relationship as “free” but generally

will form his intentions only in relation to the wishes and needs of his companion. The free action obviously emerges here not from interests or purposes anchored in the will of a solitary actor. But even if the negative concept of freedom were not so strongly associated with the presupposition of an isolated “I,” it would still not adequately capture the structure of freedom within love or friendship. For not only are the interventions of other persons into one’s own sphere of action not felt as limitations, which would conform to the principle that only “arbitrary” or “uncontrolled” interferences impair the exercise of negative freedom, but also the wills of the participating persons are so attuned to and enmeshed with each other that talk of “intervention” loses its meaning (Pettit 2003). The limitation of one’s own will with respect to the concrete other frequently rises to such a level that it becomes impossible to distinguish clearly and definitively one’s own interests or intentions from those of the other. The aspirations of both persons overlap not only in certain respects but permanently interpenetrate each other, so that their fulfillment can only be understood as a common concern.⁵ Where, however, individual interests are melded with those of others, where “mine” and “yours” can no longer sufficiently be distinguished, the freedom of a person should no longer be measured according to whether her “own” intentions can be realized without arbitrary interference.

It should already be clear that the examples of democratic will-formation and personal relationships have more in common than it would appear at first glance. The point at which the negative model of freedom fails is nearly identical in each case. In both democratic participation and personal relationships, it is unclear what constitutes one’s “own” will, in respect to which the unrestricted realization of the free act of the individual could be assessed. In the case of democratic will-formation, a subject only understands her political actions correctly if she thinks from the concurrent perspective of a “We,” the permanent renewal of which she contributes to with her own beliefs. But because of the necessity of remaining open to other perspectives, the aspect of these beliefs that is truly proper to the individual subject is only something preliminary and tentative. The beliefs therefore cannot accurately be taken as a stable output variable that is used to measure the unhindered realization of freedom. Something similar is true in the case of friendship and romantic relationships, in which the boundary between one’s own intention and that of the other fall away to an even greater extent. Because of the shared perspective of a “We,” the plans and the aims of the other are implicated in the determination of one’s own will, such that the aspirations of both participants become intertwined.

⁵ On the distinction between “overlapping” and “intertwining ends,” see Brudney 2010.

Both in such personal relationships and in democratic political life, the negative model of freedom is inappropriate to describe the kind of freedom individuals practice. In these social contexts, freedom consists in an unforced cooperation, which assumes a higher degree of consensus concerning the aims of action than the negative model of freedom is capable of accommodating.

One might object to the argument up to this point that these examples, even if they do not represent instances of negative freedom, can nonetheless be understood in terms of positive freedom. Since we draw on this second category to clarify certain aspects of our normative culture, by speaking, for example, of moral autonomy, it would make sense to attempt to understand democratic participation and love and friendship in terms of the other model of freedom Berlin put forward. But this attempt, too, quickly reveals itself to be inappropriate for articulating the kind of freedom we realize in these cases. With concepts of positive freedom, we no longer describe an individual action as “free” insofar as there are no arbitrary, external obstacles to its exercise. Rather the freedom of an action is understood in terms of its realization of higher ends or values – whether this should mean agreement with moral norms, as for Kant, or the actualization of one’s own natural needs, as in the romantic tradition.⁶ As long we understand freedom, however, only as an activity performed by an individual subject, in which it practices a given capability (such as norm orientation or the articulation of needs), then the free character of the activities described in the earlier examples has not been adequately disclosed. For their distinctiveness consists in the fact that multiple subjects must act for one another for each to experience her activity from her own individual perspective as a common practice of freedom. There is indeed some overlap here with the idea of positive freedom, insofar as citizens or lovers or friends must orient themselves to certain ideals – such as the good of egalitarian popular sovereignty or the good of trusting intimacy – to act for one another in the appropriate sense. But it is this “for-one-another” that constitutes the entire difference between these forms of freedom and the traditional idea of positive freedom. For in democratic will-formation and intimate relationships, the good that is striven for can only be realized when multiple subjects carry out uncoerced actions, which reciprocally complement one another and thus enable free collaboration.

To be sure, this suggestion could also mean that the difference between positive freedom and the third form of freedom we have been searching for only consists in the kind of good pursued, rather than in the mode of

⁶ On this spectrum of positive freedom, see Geuss 1995.

exercise itself. Whereas in the case of positive freedom, goods and values are searched for that are “individual,” in the sense that they are only realizable on account of individual capabilities, these distinctive cases of freedom could be said to concern the pursuit of goods or values that have a “collective” character, because their realization is only possible through the united efforts of several subjects. Then we would take democratic will-formation or friendship or love as representing collective versions of positive freedom – a possibility that Berlin occasionally touches on in his famous essay, if only to discard it because of the inherent danger of its despotic misuse (Berlin 1969, pp. 145–54). The reasons for his rejection certainly make it plain that he conceives the collective exercise of positive freedom by precisely the same measure as its individual enactment: namely, that the members of a homogenous group must all perform the same action to realize in consonance those values and goods the achievement of which is the goal of freedom. But such a picture does not in any way correspond to the kind of freedom we have discerned in democratic will-formation or romance and friendship. The participants in these cases do not behave like the members of a group who have been forced into line. To the contrary, they must always renegotiate among themselves how they would like to apportion the responsibilities resulting from the shared value orientation, and thus assign reciprocally complementary contributions to the common project. The “We” that must be assumed between citizens or lovers or friends is therefore something totally different from the collective subject Isaiah Berlin had in mind with his idea of positive freedom. In the collective positive freedom Berlin described, one is committed to an ethical end that guides the action contributions of all individuals uniformly. In the cases we have considered, participants are indeed oriented toward certain values but must continually renegotiate the form in which common tasks are to be distributed in light of their ongoing reinterpretation of common aims. Alongside the limitation of his will with respect to that of others, the individual nonetheless retains a right to have a say in how the relevant activities should intertwine with and reciprocally complement one another. In democratic participation, it thus becomes clear that the participants in the cooperative production of a common will can always choose whether they want the role of speaker or listener, of demonstrator or spectator. Likewise, in the case of love or friendship, the participants recognize the possibility of motivating each other to take on a new distribution of tasks and obligations. The participants in these examples are involved in the commonly assumed “We” in a different way than the members of the collective that Berlin imagined as the bearer of a supra-individual process of realizing positive freedom. They retain a right to have a say in how they want their intentions intertwined with one

another in the pursuit of a goal that is constantly redefined collaboratively, and thus to behold in the freedom of others a condition of their own freedom. We can therefore provisionally conclude that the collective version of the concept of positive freedom is inapposite to capture the form of cooperative freedom that is evidently performed in the social practices of democratic participation or love and friendship. In these cases, my freedom is grounded on the unforced intermeshing of our activities. On this basis, I can envisage the other not as a limitation but rather as a requirement for the realization of my strivings, without thereby giving up the possibility of codetermining the goal to be achieved, and the form of this intermeshing. Before I pursue this train of thought further, I first examine whether one can find suggestions of such a third, social or intersubjective model of freedom in the philosophical tradition.

II

The thesis that the form of social praxis exemplified by democratic will-formation and personal relationships constitutes an independent category of freedom has been an undercurrent in political-philosophic thinking since Hegel. Hegel himself believed that the two forms of freedom, which Berlin would later label positive and negative, did not reach the highest level of freedom that ought to be available to members of modern society. Instead he conceived of a third stage of freedom, which he called “objective freedom,” the meaning of which remains contested by scholars.⁷ The basic thought Hegel proceeded from is weaved into the terminology of his philosophical thinking, but it can be rendered independent of this framework in a much simpler form: If a person’s individual action is conceived of as free only in the negative sense that there can be no impediments to the exercise of the will in the external world, such a conception fails to consider that the intentions underlying the action can only truly be freely formed when they too are independent from causal force and thus anchored in self-positing reasons. Kant, following Rousseau, had similarly concluded that the will can be free only when its content is determined by rational considerations. Hegel argues that this Kantian view, however, leads to the equally peculiar consequence that there is no guarantee that self-determined intentions can actually be realized in the objective world. From the defects of these two concepts of freedom, Hegel developed a synthetic view, according to which the complete idea of individual freedom would only be achieved if the self-positing resolutions of the will can be

⁷ On this reconstruction of the free will, see Hegel’s exemplary discussion in Hegel PR §§1–32: 25–62.

thought of as furthered or “willed” in, or even by, reality. For Hegel this was possible in those “ethical” spheres of modern society in which the freely chosen intentions of participants intertwine with one another, complement one another, and thus find “willed” fulfillment within social reality.

It is not yet altogether clear from this rather formal, broad-brushed presentation what Hegel meant to convey with his idea of a third, “objective” freedom. Here the different interpretations of Hegel depend on how strongly Hegel is thought to remain influenced by Kant’s conception of freedom. According to Robert Brandom, Hegel only “socializes” the Kantian idea of “positive” freedom, in that he makes the ability of individuals to bind themselves to norms dependent on the recognition of a community of others whose recognitive authority is also freely recognized by the individual herself. The resulting reciprocal recognition constitutes the normative horizon in which a subject makes use of his positive freedom to renew the shared cultural potential through her own “expressive” initiatives (Brandom 2009, pp. 72–7). This interpretation converges with the idea of social freedom I have hinted at so far, insofar as the core of the Hegelian idea is understood as connecting individual freedom to the assumption of the perspective of a “We.” But the freedom that is realized through this participation in a community of subjects reciprocally recognizing one another’s autonomy is, in Brandom’s interpretation of Hegel, understood only as an individual exercise, as the expressive act of the individual who lends a new accent to the shared culture. In contrast I believe that Hegel understood the freedom made possible by reciprocal recognition as itself a common or cooperative practice. According to Hegel, it is only by complementing one another that the intentions of the individuals can achieve the individually (subjectively) desired conclusion. Thus freedom in its “objective” sense is not something an individual subject can perform on his own, but rather is something he is only able to achieve in regulated collective action with others.

I have similar reservations with regard to the profound interpretation that Frederick Neuhausser has given to the Hegelian idea of “objective” freedom, the subjective dimension of which he attempts to reconstruct as “social freedom.” According to his interpretation, Hegel sets out in his *Philosophy of Right* from the idea that a complete concept of individual freedom must be composed of all the institutional requirements that allow the members of society to articulate their particular identities without coercion in the external form of social roles, and thus to accept institutionally established paths of self-realization (Neuhausser 2003, pp. 145–74). Here too individual freedom is linked with the assumption of the perspective of a “We,” which makes it possible to understand

specific, freedom-enabling institutions as rooted in common interests. But, as for Brandom, Neuhausser understands the practice of “socially” conditioned freedom as an individual act that every participant should be able to perform for herself without requiring the reciprocal action of another subject.

In a similar vein, Robert Pippin interprets Hegel’s concept of freedom as referring primarily to the rational agency of the individual subject, though he acknowledges that such freedom is for Hegel only possible in the context of social institutions that provide individual agents with the appropriate recognitive status (Pippin 2008a, pp. 121–209). According to my interpretation, however, Hegel is driving at a much stronger intersubjective idea with his conception of freedom: The individual can only realize the freedom that is available through certain institutions when he acts in cooperation with others whose intentions make up an element of his own. Not only is it necessary for Hegel that the exercise of individual freedom proceeds from the taking-up of the perspective of the “We,” which either makes possible the constitution of a community of recognition or a common commitment to freedom-guaranteeing institutions; in addition, such an exercise of freedom must be undertaken with the expectation that the other members of the community will carry out actions that correspond to my intentions or needs. Only this doubled intersubjectivity, as both a condition and as an end to be produced from my free action, makes it possible to understand why Hegel again and again thought of love as the paradigm for his own idea of freedom. Here, according to the famous formula, one is *at home with oneself in the other* (PR §7Z) in the sense that one can understand the actions of the other as requirements for the realization of one’s own, self-determined intentions.

As the famous formulation “to be at home with oneself in the other” already suggests, Hegel intended far more with his idea of “objective” freedom than to identify for therapeutic purposes certain possibilities of unforsed and thus free collaboration in modern society (Honneth 2010, ch. 4). Ultimately he wanted to construe our entire relationship to the world in terms of the recognition of our own posited ends in the Other of objective reality, and thus also to underscore idealistically our freedom in relation with the natural environment. For our purposes, however, it suffices to limit ourselves to the accomplishment of freedom in the social world, since this is the context that would be elaborated by later authors, who would furnish it with new aims. Already in early French socialism’s critique of market relationships, which were expanding at that time, there was an idea of freedom that can only be appropriately understood with reference to its roots in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. Unlike the understanding of freedom in classical liberal law, which is charged with the

legitimation of purely private interests in the capitalist market, freedom is understood in the writings of Fourier and Proudhon as a solidary activity of being-for-another, which both thought was manifest in the unforced cooperation between craftsmen. Just like Hegel, Proudhon suggests that individual freedom must be thought of not merely “as a barrier” but rather as a “help” to the freedom of all others (Proudhon 1969; see also Fourier 1996).

Hegel’s concept of freedom appears even more starkly in the early writings of Marx (Brudney 2010). The young Marx sketches the image of a social community where the members no longer work “against each other” but rather “for one another.” Here we find the guiding idea of socialism, namely, that one can speak of members of society having real freedom only when the actions of individuals complement one another in such a way that the freedom of the one is the precondition for the freedom of every other (Honneth 2015, ch. 4). As for his French predecessors, the playful interweaving of action in the cooperation of craftsmen serves as Marx’s historical model. According to Marx’s conception, the subjects in such interactions are “free” in a particular way, because each can learn from the other participants that his contributions to the coordinated plans for action are acknowledged and seen as necessary and welcome complements to the others’ intentions. The idea of “reciprocally complementing” one another makes it clear how much Marx’s cooperative model owes to the Hegelian idea of freedom. The attempt to imagine the social integration of a future society entirely according to the measure of such unforced economic cooperation, namely as a community of subjects working for one another, constitutes in my view the core ethical impulse of socialism. Here the social form of the exercise of freedom, which Hegel only saw at work in individual spheres of modern societies, is carried over without differentiation into the entire society, in which the members are thought of as cooperative partners who reciprocally strive to satisfy the needs of one another. I do not want to go further into the difficulties that attended this original vision of socialism, as it ignored the requirements of the functional differentiation of modern society. For my purposes, it is necessary only to recall an undercurrent of political-philosophical thought in which the idea of a distinctively social freedom was already thought of as valid in the nineteenth century.

In the following century, a similar thought was taken up by Hannah Arendt, who understood democratic action to express the original inter-subjectivity of human freedom. Whereas for Marx labor itself was seen as a potential context for social freedom, for Arendt only in the political sphere, understood as a realm of public contestation over the common good, are we free, because there the individual sheds his private concerns

and must widen his previously egocentric perspective in collaborative activity (Arendt 1998, ch. 1).

While it is certainly not the case that Arendt's concept of social freedom was inspired by Hegel, his influence is clearly apparent in the last of the representatives of the philosophical tradition of freedom I will mention: John Dewey, under the direct influence of Hegel,⁸ argued throughout his life that individual freedom is falsely understood if it is exclusively understood as a capacity or possession of a solitary subject. Rather, the degree of our freedom increases when we participate in socially cooperative activity, because we are better able to realize our intentions and wishes the more various the interactions in which we reckon with the responses and contributions of others. For Dewey as for Hegel, the true form for the exercise of individual freedom is represented in contributions to the distributed labor of realizing a common aim, because in such projects the realization of my "will" is also intended by others. I thus want to conclude my short reminiscence of the largely forgotten tradition of social freedom with a citation from Dewey, in which the underlying idea of social freedom is beautifully expressed: "Liberty," according to the American pragmatist, "is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which takes place only in rich and manifold association with others: the power to be an individualized self making a distinctive contribution and enjoying in its own way the fruits of association" (Dewey 1984b, p. 329).

III

Adherents of Berlin's conception would surely object to this plea for a third, social concept of freedom that it has the fatal propensity to confuse the value of freedom with other ideals shared by humanity. Just as little as we should surreptitiously smuggle the goal of social justice into the concept of individual freedom, we may not underhandedly furnish it with the aim of coexistence in solidarity, for both efforts would ignore the irreducible pluralism of our values and deny the possible conflicts between them (Berlin 1969, p. 167). In this last part of my essay, I want to forestall this objection by once more working out the aspect of freedom in the aforementioned patterns of interaction to prove, first, that these do in fact concern a separate kind of freedom. Next, I want to show that the exercise of this freedom in or through cooperative actions need not be bound to the common pursuit of the same aim but rather is compatible with the achievement of completely divergent values. For this reason, the constant factor in such practices is the particular form of social freedom,

⁸ See Shook and Good 2010 and Dewey 1984a.

whereas the values that are pursued thereby can vary and thus ought not be confused with the underlying shape of freedom itself.

If we look back again at the previously presented examples of social freedom – democratic will-formation, love and friendship, and finally for socialists economic production – the first remarkable element is that the participating subjects must understand themselves as members of a “We” without, however, losing their individual independence. To be sure, the successful performance of actions is bound up with the assumption of complementary actions on the part of others, so that the participants reciprocally take up of the perspective of the “We.” But this in no way suggests that they together constitute a collective that acts like a univocal, merely enlarged “I.” With Philip Pettit, we can label the social ontological position in which this intersubjective exercise of freedom can best be grasped “holistic individualism.” This concept assumes that the realization of certain human capacities requires social groupings and thus entities that can only be described holistically (Pettit 1993, pp. 271–2). But this does not in any way preclude the existence of independent individuals. Why, nonetheless, should individual actions that presuppose a community of cooperative subjects be understood as a particular class of freedom? What is so distinctive about such unforced intertwining of actions that makes it justifiable to introduce a new category of freedom alongside the existing models of negative and positive freedom?

Here, in my view, Hegel and Dewey point in the direction of an answer, because they each point to different aspects of the same phenomenon. Both are of the opinion that the distinctiveness of the reciprocal process of unforced intertwining of ends lies in the fact that the contribution of each is experienced as willed by the other. In contrast to all other actions, which can be understood as either “negatively” or “positively” free, this class of cooperative actions shows that we can each assume the consent of the other and thus can carry out our own action with a consciousness of unforced responsiveness. Not only is there no expectation of arbitrary interference from partners to the interaction; more than this, one can trust that what one freely does will also be freely wished by the other or all other participants. In more systematic terms, the uncoerced nature of a communicative action is here increased because both sides know of each other not only that they perform a freely chosen action but also that the carrying out of this action fulfills an autonomously generated intention of the other. Hegel emphasizes above all the cognitive side of the exercise of social freedom as it should exist in the reflexive structure of commonly shared knowledge. Dewey much more starkly stresses the affective side, in the enjoyment of experiencing how one’s own actions are seen by others as preparing the way for completing their own ongoing actions.

The exercise of such a form of freedom certainly requires, as already indicated by the accompanying consciousness of a “We,” that the participants pursue common aims or values, because these common aims and values require them, in forming their own intentions, to take the intentions of the others into consideration. Each participant limits herself to carrying out such actions that she knows will contribute to furthering their shared aims. Whereas positive freedom is related to the assumption of a reflexive act of self-determination or self-articulation, social freedom is bound to the assumption of the development of a common will. Where such a common will is not present and the perspective of a “We” cannot be taken up by the subjects, it is not possible to form in their consciousness an agreed-upon scheme of cooperation that would allow them to act for one another through their complementary contributions. To this extent, the idea of social freedom, unlike the concept of negative freedom, but like the positive concept, is a selective category of human freedom. It does not designate a general, unconditional capacity of subjects, but rather one that is bound to the existence of certain social conditions, namely, belonging to a community of ethically concordant members.

This assumption of membership in an ethical community cannot however be misunderstood to mean that the participants have completely lost their capacity for personal initiative and independence. Why this cannot be so can now be more precisely formulated because we have learned that in the case of social freedom, one’s own contributory actions must fulfill the autonomously generated wishes or intentions of one’s fellow participants. This assumption can remain valid only so long as I concede to the other the opportunity to place the negotiated scheme of cooperative action into question when her individual needs, interests, or positions have changed. Because such a claim must be reciprocally acknowledged, so that all participants can understand their contributions as fulfilling the autonomous wishes of others, the exercise of social freedom must be bound to the assumption of the recognition of the claim of every other to codetermine the commonly practiced schema of cooperation. Though social freedom can be exercised only in the pursuit of common aims, the determinate content of these aims always remains open for revision and contestation by the members of the “We.”

This “right to have a say” – or better, this recognized claim – cannot itself be understood according to the standard of (so-called) negative or positive freedom, as though another form of individual freedom protruded from outside into the exercise of social freedom. What the participants invoke when they place the previously agreed-upon scheme of cooperation into question is the result neither of a purely private consideration of interest nor of purely individual self-determination, as Kant

had in mind. Rather they discover the content of their will against the normative background of jointly entered responsibilities in the course of checking whether their wills remain in agreement with the negotiated scheme of cooperation. The difference here is that the participants in this process of discovery do not proceed from an ethical null point, as suggested by the models of negative or positive liberty, but rather from the acceptance of responsibilities they already have with regard to others in the pursuit of common aims. Thus they will bring to the table only those suggestions for adapting the scheme of cooperation that appear necessary in light of their changed needs or interests, to the extent that these are compatible with collectively settled goals. The claim to have a say in determining the distribution of burdens and responsibilities in romantic relationships, friendships, or democratic communities is not externally imposed but is rather an intrinsic element of the social freedom that the participants together enjoy in such relationships.

These considerations lead to the last point of my essay, in which I come back to the question of whether the suggestion of a third, social model of freedom commits the mistake of confusing the value of freedom with the value of solidarity. Such a reproach immediately suggests itself because the participants can allow their intentions seamlessly to intertwine with one another only insofar as they together strive for the common goal of solidarity grounded in trust, whether this takes the form of sexual intimacy in love, the reciprocal support of friendship, or the egalitarian elaboration of a common will in a democratic community. The reason why this works for all contributors – so the objection runs – is the unified realization of the good of solidarity and not, as I would have it, the value of a particular kind of freedom. However, this objection requires more information about what the value of solidary cohesion should consist in. And thus one confronts the true difficulty, namely, that although one can identify such positive experiences as reciprocal trust or mutual aid, this does not serve to explain the special quality such solidarity has for us. What difference would it make if the various forms of solidary relationships drew their value for participants from the fact that they constituted different variants of social freedom? Then that which makes love, friendship, and democratic collaboration worth striving for could not simply be explained by reference to the good of solidarity. Rather solidarity would draw its value for us from the fact that it allows us to exercise in different ways a form of freedom in which others are not experienced, as in the usual case, as limitations, but rather as conditions of the possibility of forming and realizing our own intentions. We strive for solidary relationships not for their own sake, but rather for the particular kind of freedom they embody in various forms. What attracts us to solidary experiences,

and what makes these kinds of relationships worth striving for, is an experience that is precluded in other forms of social life, namely, to see, in the reflection of our own intentions and wishes in the complementary intentions and wishes of our counterparts, that we can only realize them by acting-for-one-another.

These considerations allow us to conclude that we are not able to assess the value of solidary relationships without reference to the positive experience of social freedom. But beyond this, the idea of social freedom represents the overarching evaluative concept for the special cases of solidary relationships. For what makes the experience of solidarity valuable for us can be explained only with reference to "finding-oneself-again-in-others," which is what is meant by the idea of social freedom. Social freedom is related to solidarity as type to token: The various forms of solidarity are empirical manifestations of that which makes "acting-for-another" into a human good. Then, however, the objection no longer obtains that the idea of social freedom falsely confuses the value of freedom with that of solidarity. Precisely the opposite is the case: We are totally unable to comprehend the value of certain social forms of being together unless, alongside the concepts of "negative" and "positive" freedom, we have at our disposal a third concept of freedom that makes it clear to us that we strive for such forms of being together for the sake of experiencing the complete absence of coercion. The distinctiveness of this third form of freedom is the complete withering away of all hindrances that the intentions of other subjects generally pose for me. Only here do I find in the social world a sort of "home," which Hegel already knew could exist only where I am at home with myself in others. Let me conclude therefore by noting that under the historical conditions of the increasing juridification and economization of our culture, and thus of the rise of a purely negatively understood freedom, it is high time to recover the buried tradition of the idea of social freedom.

11 “Our Amphibian Problem”: Nature in History in Adorno’s Hegelian Critique of Hegel

J. M. Bernstein

None of the reconcilements claimed by absolute idealism . . . has stood up, whether in logic or in politics and history.

T. W. Adorno

Adorno’s negative dialectics are the renewal of Hegelian dialectics after Hegel. Adorno contends that the unfolding of modern history has extinguished Hegel’s theodicy of reason: Rational freedom in Hegel’s sense has not been realized; on the contrary, it has been not just thwarted but annulled by rationalized social forms. And this must matter to our understanding of the character and commitments of Hegelian conceptuality itself: Hegel’s claimed completion and overcoming of Kantian reason must involve more than dissolving Kantian skepticism about knowledge of things-in-themselves. Overcoming our “amphibian problem,” that is, dissolving Kant’s radical dualism between autonomous subject and determined natural object, between rational freedom and material nature, can only be completed by a thoroughgoing *reconciliation* of nature with freedom. But this reconciliation has not been achieved, and therefore the very idea of Hegelian *reconciling reason* has not yet become historically present.

In the [opening section](#), I argue that Hegel’s historical and political theodicy is both essential to his system and clearly unattained (even in principle). In [Section II](#), I argue that the crux of the historical blockage is caused by the amphibian problem, that is, by the duality between spirit and nature; and further, even on Hegel’s own account, this abyss is a product of ‘instrumental reason,’ a thesis entailing that Kantian theoretical and practical reason are both forms of instrumental reason, that is, effectively, the usurpation of practical reason by theoretical understanding. This argument is underlined through a comparison of Hegel’s theodicy claim with Adorno’s anti-theodicy argument in [Section III](#).

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I Is the Actual Rational?

Adorno remained an unqualified Hegelian because he saw the orienting gesture of Hegel's philosophy as the unremitting force of the negative: "In extending ... transcendental philosophy ... through the thesis of reason's identity with what exists and making it a critique of what exists, a critique of any and every positivity, Hegel denounced the world, whose theodicy constitutes his program" (Adorno 1993, p. 30). There is a stark tension between the "particular moments" of Hegel's philosophy, which are "intended to be negative," and his bare "assertion" of completeness (Adorno 1993, p. 27). For Adorno, the assertion contradicts the practice of the "principle of reality's becoming, through which it is more than its positivity" (Adorno 1993, p. 31). In *asserting* completeness, Hegel betrayed the rational core of his own philosophy; Adorno's philosophy seeks to rescue Hegelian dialectics, the toil of determinate negation, from Hegelian dogma.

Or rather, this is the requirement on philosophy *after* Hegel. Adorno's philosophical project may be thus regarded as the interrogation of what it is to be an unqualified Hegelian after Hegel, after Marx, after Nietzsche, after the devastations of World War I, after the failures of the great bourgeois revolutions (1848) and of the twentieth-century socialist revolutions, and most centrally for Adorno after Auschwitz. Adorno's critique of Hegel turns precisely on this: What must we say about Hegel's *system* – about his conceptions of conceptuality, rationality, reconciliation, and the character of dialectical transformations – "after," in light of the manifest failure of modernity to achieve anything like the state of reconciliation that Hegel took to have been achieved "in principle"? The conundrum is: How far can "in principle" stretch without betraying Hegel's principle that the rational must be actual, that actuality precedes possibility?

Here is one way to prosecute Hegelian optimism. Hegel's conception of the "in principle" arrival of reconciliation is to "recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present"; the rational insight into the actuality of reason in the discernible outlines of existing institutional structures is "the *reconciliation* with actuality which philosophy grants to those who have received the inner call *to comprehend* ... what has being in and for itself" (Hegel PR, Preface: 23). One urgent complaint about Hegel's procedure is that the very focus on the rational kernel of institutional practices amounts to a methodologically rationalized blindness to the *cross of the present* and hence does not address whether the sufferings endemic to it might make the demand that one recognize one's freedom in these institutional arrangements morally otiose, a demand that one deny that one's own or the suffering of others *rationally* matters. When is the philosophical

reconstruction of an extant 'rationality structure' a denial that the suffering of those within its purview humanly matters? Even if Adorno overshoots in claiming that even "the smallest trace of senseless suffering" (Adorno 1973, p. 203) belies the claim of rational freedom, the question remains: How much suffering must there be before the claim for rational actuality can be rationally challenged?

Put that worry aside for the moment; it is not that complaint that is initially central. Rather, the first critical difficulty is that Hegel cannot, in fact, segregate *what* is rose from *what* is cross because the "system of needs" – Hegel's term for the market economy that was already ripening into full-blown capitalism – is essential to his vindication of modernity; but his account of it has proved to be, at best, of an ideality that is without even the possibility of actualization. Further, the actual functioning of the system of needs has effectively undermined the role of the state in realizing freedom.

For Hegel, the system of needs was to provide for the satisfaction of needs in relation to things, and in relation to work and activity. These two domains – the satisfaction of material needs and productive activity – are "particular" and "subjective"; they pertain to individual selves in their particularity. Under conditions of modernity, these particular ends are satisfied socially: Each individual's work contributes to the satisfaction of the needs of others; hence needs and work, as they exist in reality, "become a *being for others* by whose needs and work their satisfaction is mutually conditioned" (Hegel PR §192: 229). The mutual conditionality is what was to lift the system of needs from its particularity into universality – we are all in this together – not just formally, but substantively for Hegel: "This universality, as the *quality of being recognized*, is the moment which makes isolated and abstract needs, means, and modes of satisfaction into *concrete*, i.e., *social* ones" (Hegel PR §192: 229). Hegel knew that this system was not self-sufficient in its provisions, and that it would require a range of supplementary institutional arrangements that we might identify as those essential to a welfare state. To account for the recognition due to each individual as an individual, to recognize the right of subjectivity, Hegel relies on the promise of welfare state capitalism.

While there have been moments in recent history in which the fulfillment of that promise appeared possible, just a matter of a more robust political will, there are overwhelming reasons to believe now that the original Marxist critique was correct: Capital, as structured by the class of owners possessing control over the means of production exploiting the class of workers possessing only their labor power, generates increasing inequality (Piketty 2014), increasing disparities in life opportunities, a relegation of individuals to being appendages to machines or faceless

functionaries in service industries, the increasing inability for paid employment to be sufficient for need satisfaction, and the perpetuation of the problem of poverty and the production of a rabble. The exportation of the problem overseas, as Hegel recommended, has globalized and deepened the oppressions and irrationalities of the system rather than relieving and resolving them (Hegel PR §§243–5: 266–7).¹ Economic inequality underwrites radical power differentials that in turn undermine the actuality of political freedom. None of this is news, but it matters radically to Hegel's theory since it entails that individuals are not *recognized* in their particularity, and the presumptive *ethical* universality of the system of needs is therefore forfeit: It remains particular, and its factual universality dissolves rational universality into particularity once more; as a consequence individual freedom is not realized in the rational state.

The system of needs was always the rogue element in Hegel's thinking; it provided an urgent space whereby a social mechanism would allow individuals, as individuals, to exercise their claim to individual freedom and need satisfaction and nonetheless coordinated their life activity with the life activities of their social fellows, enabling Hegel to claim that properly adjusted (with the aid of the corporations and state provisions), it was a system of recognition that, through its mechanisms of mutual dependency of everyone on everyone, secured the recognition of the independence of each. But the system of needs was always a "system" or "mechanism" for the achievement of recognition and hence always a form of recognition that went behind the backs of agents – they need not and typically in practice do not directly "recognize" one another; recognition of recognition was to be achieved reflectively. The possibility of the system detaching itself from the control and needs of the agents participating in it was patently present from the get-go, as Smith and Hegel perfectly saw. History has proved the detachment not accidental, but emphatic and irreversible, and its forms of deforming the lives of individuals insistent and inescapable (however randomly distributed). This is one limb of history "after" Hegel: Capital has made the world into a rational "system in its literal sense" (Adorno 1993, p. 27), hence one antagonistic to reason in its Hegelian sense: Neither mutual recognition nor rational freedom has been achieved. But since freedom and reason are rationally "constellated" with one another, then the real "can be considered rational only insofar as the idea of freedom, that is, human

¹ Hegel understood these trends and hoped that his version of welfare state mechanisms, viz., corporations, would become a second "ethical root of the state" alongside the family (PR §255: 272). Hence, another way of stating the Marxian critique would be to say that without an effective second ethical root of the state, both economy and state are emptied of their claim to be bearers of cognitive relations among subjects.

beings' genuine self-determination, shines through it" (Adorno 1993, p. 44). Because genuine self-determination cannot shine through capital reproduction, the (instrumental) rationality of the existing world is (Hegelianly) irrational.²

Adorno's way of expressing this failure is to say that "the concept of the primacy of reason contains the idea that reason has the task of taming, suppressing, ordering and governing whatever is unreasonable, instead of absorbing it into itself in a spirit of reconciliation" (Adorno 2006, p. 45).³ Adorno concedes that it is reason that rules the world, but it is not a formation of reason that could support or facilitate relations of *recognition* among individuals. Because individuals are not recognized as self-conscious, self-determining agents in their participation within the system of needs, their particularity itself and its principle, the right of subjectivity, are liquidated. They are *subsumed* under the reigning universal, capital. But capital, Adorno argues, because it is governed by the principle of equivalence, is the quintessence of instrumental reason. Hence, the process of history that is realized in modernity is not the achievement of universal freedom, not an achievement of spirit. Here is Adorno's unabashed Hegelian statement of this failure:

The more powerful the world spirit is, the more we are justified in doubting whether the world spirit really is the world spirit, rather than its opposite. This leads us to conclude that the primacy of the totality in history represents anything but the victory of the Idea . . . The world spirit [that] *exists* as the universal . . . is not *spirit*. (Adorno 2006, p. 46)

I take Adorno's statement that the universality that exists is anything but Idea as a statement of his allegiance to Hegel's concept of Idea. While Hegel's notion of Idea is subject to dispute, at least in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* it simply signifies the unity of (rational) form and (sociohistorical) content: "For *form* in its most concrete significance is reason as conceptual cognition, and *content* is reason as the substantial essence of both ethical and natural actuality; the conscious identity of the two is the philosophical idea" (Hegel PR, Preface: 22). This, again, is the effort of comprehending, having a critical and reflective awareness of the rationality already structuring – or failing to structure – the institutions through which the necessary elements of human life activity are realized. So the claim that the universal structures of the present are

² This is the precise scope of Adorno's notorious phrase "the whole is the untrue" (Adorno 1993, p. 87).

³ *History and Freedom* is a course of lectures Adorno gave in the mid-1960s that became the chapter "World Spirit and Natural History: An Excursion on Hegel" in his *Negative Dialectics*.

anything but Idea is to say that reason is not realized. Indeed, from the earlier contrast between *subsumption* and *reconciliation*, we can infer that the reason that rules the world makes reconciliation, the recognition of the individual in her particularity, impossible and, worse, undermines to the point of destruction individuals *as* self-determining particulars.

II Amphibian Problems: Of Nature and Spirit

Adorno's underlying thought to this juncture is terribly familiar: We need to distinguish between fundamental forms of rationality: theoretical reason and practical reason, scientific rationality and value rationality, the understanding and reason, instrumental reason and communicative reason, instrumental reason and recognitive reason. And, oversimplifying wildly, one consistent diagnosis of the ills of modernity involves demonstrating how, under the impact of secularization, disenchantment, and scientific discovery beginning with Galileo and Newton, the ideal-type model of scientific/instrumental rationality was first fully formed (with the mighty history of Platonized geometry behind it) and then, with the authority of the monotheistic idea that there can be only one truth as to how the world is and one reason articulating that truth as leverage, slowly but persistently drove out, blocked, and repressed the rationality intrinsic to relations of recognition (in all its versions), as well as the other diverse cognitive forms of encounter: interpreting, understanding, reporting, testifying, witnessing, imitating, narrating, expressing, naming, remembering, communicating, translating, acts of induction and abduction, and on. The whole great panoply of human cognitive forms was slowly delegitimized, becoming dim and suspect shadows compared to the bright light of determinative judgment and deductive explanation.

In most versions of this story, the worry about the hegemony of scientific reason over rationality as such usually comes from two interrelated sources: moral reason and social understanding, where the assumption is that the logic appropriate to explaining the causal relations among material things must be inappropriate to grasping human social relations in their interpretive complexity and normative demandingness. What distinguishes Adorno's version of this story is his thesis that we cannot have robust relations of mutual recognition among persons without simultaneously achieving a *reconciliation* between *spirit*, as the self-moving dynamic of human social relations participating in robust forms of recognition and misrecognition, and *nature*. What further distinguishes Adorno's version is the thesis that the authority of ideal-type scientific reason is derived from its functional role as being the form of reason necessary for negotiating the physical world for the purpose of individual and species survival.

Abstracting from the concrete qualities of objects and attending solely to their causal powers and then treating those causal powers in generalized form to the point where concepts designating the properties of objects are taken as condensed causal laws are the essential gestures for attending to objects in ways sufficient for routine activities of hunting, growing, harvesting, heating, clothing, transporting, building, housing, mending, and so on. The original formation of reason in its subsuming-deductive orientation is thus a product of the drive for self-preservation, or, to give the thesis its full Adornoian statement, ideal-type determinative judgment and scientific reason are forms of instrumental reason because they are that formation of human cognition necessary for individual and collective self-preservation, making them the expression of the drive for self-preservation in rational form. Hence for Adorno, the *authority* of ideal-type scientific reason is in fact the authority of nature once removed (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, pp. 1–34; Bernstein 2001, ch. 2). Hence, in so far as this form of reason becomes dominant, human rational spiritual relations remain under the authority of nature, under the authority of a reason that is designed *narrowly and reductively* to satisfy the ends of individual and species survival in utter indifference to other features of human lives – everything we might say that makes them distinctly human and not merely animal lives. Adorno's genealogical gesture is not intended as a critique of instrumental reason as such – in its appropriate place it comprises a cornerstone of spiritual life; only its hegemony requires challenge, the claim of ideal-type determinative judgment and scientific reason to exhaust the possibility of cognitive encounter.

In fact, this way of setting up the problem is *not* unique to Adorno; he was anticipated, powerfully, by both Schiller and, in a different register, Hegel. Although he does not conceive the drive of theoretical reason as a historical formation of the drive to self-preservation, Schiller does analyze Kantian reason as producing a fragmentation of the human subject in which rational freedom (form) and determined nature (sense) are taken as incommensurable with each other. Schiller equally anticipates Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment in arguing that in repudiating and subordinating our encounters with qualitatively effulgent nature, we make a principle of nature into the principle of reason, roughly, construing Kantian moral reason – as the site of human rational independence from nature – as the force of nature (the *drive* to self-preservation) in rational form: "We disown Nature in her rightful sphere only to submit to her tyranny in the moral, and while resisting the impact she makes upon our senses are content to take over her principles" (Schiller 1967: Fifth Letter, p. 27). Robert Hullot-Kentor comments on this passage: "Reason, the

principle of unity, excludes what is other than itself – nature – and thus regresses to nature. The measure of the failure of development of reason is that it is sacrificial” (2006, p. 34). About the claim that Kantian rational unity sacrifices the particular to the universal, Schiller is explicit: “it will always argue a still defective education if the moral character is able to assert itself only by sacrificing the natural” (Schiller 1967: Fourth Letter, p. 19).

The very idea that *reconciliation* should become a term of normative authorization begins with Schiller; in Hegel, it becomes a constitutive criterion of reason. Hence, in seeking a philosophy of reconciliation between freedom and nature as a condition of mutual recognition, Hegel is following Schiller’s lead (Henrich 1982).⁴ In the Introduction to his *Aesthetics*, Hegel recapitulates in a highly condensed form the argumentation with which he had concluded the Spirit section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. What had appeared as “The Moral Worldview” is presented in the *Aesthetics* as simply the standpoint of contemporary “spiritual culture,” which is to say, Hegel is here conceding that the actuality of contemporary culture is ontologically dualist and moralizing, with Kant’s moral philosophy its highest expression. Modern individuals are “amphibious” animals who live in two worlds that “contradict one another” (Hegel VPA: I, 54). On the one side, Hegel states, modern consciousness sees itself as “imprisoned in the common world of reality . . . borne down by need and poverty . . . mastered and carried away by natural impulses and passions.” On the other side, Hegel describes modern moral selfhood in Schillerian, dialectic-of-enlightenment terms, namely, as an abstract product of reason’s own repression of nature:

The modern moral self lifts himself up to eternal ideas, to a realm of thought and freedom, gives to himself, as *will*, universal laws and prescriptions, strips the world of its enlivened and flowering reality and dissolves it into abstractions, since the spirit now upholds its right and dignity only by mishandling nature and denying its right, and so retaliates on nature the distress and violence which it has suffered from it itself. (Hegel VPA: I, 54)

After quickly dispatching Kant’s desperate game of postulates and moral hope, Hegel interjects his own brittle response.

One might have expected Hegel to argue that a more synoptic, historically self-conscious and institutionally informed picture of the modern world would show that it had already resolved the amphibian problem. But he does not take this path because he thinks, at least here, that the

⁴ Schiller’s conception of love “as the inclination of reason to unify itself with the sensible object” (Henrich 1982, p. 249) anticipates and partly formed Hegel’s thinking about both reconciliation and recognition.

claim for reconciliation in social practice is untrue. Rather, he argues, because "general culture" really is mired in this contradictory standpoint, "it becomes the task of philosophy," and not politics or history, "to supersede the oppositions . . . to show . . . that the truth lies only in the reconciliation and mediation of both, and this mediation is no mere demand, but that it is **absolutely accomplished** and is ever self-accomplishing . . . [the] two sides [of the opposition] *do not exist at all*, but that **they exist reconciled**" (Hegel VPA: I, 54–5, bold my emphasis). This passage makes the distinction between "demand" and "reconciliation" imponderable; it combines philosophical insight with historical disingenuousness. On the one hand, Hegel is making a broad, purely philosophical claim about the nature of the human, namely, that human beings are living beings who are always simultaneously more than living beings because their life activities can be known, comprehended, and thus critically redirected and refined. Karen Ng calls this the thesis of "double constitution: the determination and activity of reason always expresses itself as double – self-conscious activities are actualizations, transformations, and explicit appropriations of basic life-activities, and the particular self-relation of self-consciousness is constituted by the fact it is a life that knows itself as life, a life that can consciously grasp and determine the conditions of its life" (Ng 2015). At this level, call it the level of philosophical anthropology, nature and human mindedness are reconciled in the bald sense that mindedness is a formation of life whose capacities for conceptualized activity and understanding supervene on biological life without ever fully departing from its immersion in life: Culture and history are the way a certain type of animal *leads a life*; or, again, the human is that kind of natural being that can have a life only by leading a life.

On the other hand, as Hegel concedes, this is emphatically not the experiential actuality of contemporary culture; existing cultural practices and the self-understanding of the agents participating in those practices remain Kantian, divided, contradictory, and unreconciled, and, Adorno would argue, given the sway of capital, it could not be otherwise. It follows that nothing in existing cultural practices counts as an unqualified experience of reconciliation or even counts as a rational practice in which freedom and nature are reconciled. Even allowing for the idea of reconciliations happening "behind the back," nothing in contemporary cultural practices – even on Hegel's view – explicates how we could practically overcome our amphibian problem. In *After the Beautiful*, a work that is effectively his response to Hegel's philosophy of history, Robert Pippin underlines the failure of the amphibian problem to be resolved as it imposed itself on nineteenth-century aesthetic culture and takes Hegel's own "greatest failure" to be his lack of concern

about the threatening emptiness or anomie or failure to find adequate modes through which inner life and outer world, human mindedness and human life, could be brought into socially effective relation with each other (Pippin 2014a, pp. 60, 92, 141). In this respect, Pippin's diagnosis of modernity is at one with Adorno's. Despite this, and here is the puzzle, Pippin seeks to sidestep or deflate the very conundrum he underlines; in so doing, he means to be disabling Adorno's critique of Hegel, and to be preserving what he takes to be the rational core of Hegelianism.

Although Pippin is insistent throughout on the depth and social intransigence of the amphibian problem, his diagnosis and response to it strike me as unsatisfying; it is worth looking at Pippin's response, his version of being Hegelian after Hegel, as a way into vindicating the necessity of Adorno's. Three issues are prominent. First, after underlining how Hegel did not anticipate how "the institutions he believed would objectively realize genuine mutuality of recognition would fail to do so, rendering problematic the realization of freedom at the heart of his narrative," Pippin suddenly switches into a different gear: "At a deeper level, Hegel did not sufficiently take into account the *inherently unresolvable or perennial character* of the problem of freedom" (Pippin 2014a, p. 65, my emphasis). Nor is this shift from a local, historical problem to a "perennial" one a slip of the pen since in his conclusion Pippin repeats the claim that the problem of freedom is "now-unending" (Pippin 2014a, p. 142). While he offers no specific reasons why he thinks the problem of freedom is now incapable of resolution, so stating the issue dangerously relieves the social and historical world, the world of objective spirit, of responsibility for it, as if we did not think that there are manifest ways in which the exercise and realization of human freedom are repressed and blocked by the all-too-empirical problems of unequal accesses to power, political corruption, bureaucracy, and private ownership over the means of production. Unfreedom in modernity is pervasively structural and social in character; whatever is "perennial" in the problem of freedom pales before what is contingent and historical. In making the problem of freedom perennial, Pippin must either accept the irrationality of the whole while drawing a veil over it or claim that freedom and reason can exist without each other, so repudiating the very idea of rational freedom in Hegel's sense.

Second, when Pippin does attempt to situate the difficulty in bringing together our naturalness and mindedness in relation to the "de-mystifying, disenchanting, secularizing dynamic of modernity" (Pippin 2014a, p. 60), rather than turning to the analyses of modern social forms provided by Marx and Weber, he provides a curiously narrow characterization whose purpose, I hazard, is to *reduce* the freedom-and-reason issue solely to the

ongoing difficulty of us engaging with one another in ways that would count as mutually recognizing one another, as if face-to-face interactions were the soul of the problem of recognition. That is, Pippin is drawn to the claim that the actuality of the amphibian problem is best construed as a series of *intimate* efforts of resolving the problem of recognizing the presence of another as another autonomous self on whose recognition one depends. He thus contours the disenchantment dynamic of modernity as leading to the "emergence of a logic of social subjectivity in which the *starkness* or *nakedness* of relations of independence and dependence is ever more visible, unhidable, and in various novel ways, resisted (subjects who engage others as objects; who allow themselves to be, or refuse to be, treated as objects)" (Pippin 2014a, p. 60). Hence, in place of all the detailed structural analyses of reification, alienation, rationalization, illusory individualization, bureaucratization, and so on that tie subjective mortification to the social forms producing it (operating through individuals but behind their backs), Pippin suggests the "starkness" or "nakedness" of relations of independence and dependence as the deep issue. The justification for this substitution of terms and the consequent dismissal of the sociology of modernity are hard to fathom. I take the combination of these two gestures by Pippin – eternalizing the problem of freedom and deinstitutionalizing the problem of recognition – to be a way of, finally, protecting or insulating Hegelian conceptuality from the all-too-evident "failures" of history to realize the now merely presumptive conceptual ideals of his philosophy of history and political theory.

Third, the reduction of the problem of modernity to some empirical version of the problem of other minds enables Pippin to dismiss Adorno's (Marxist-materialist) Hegelian project,⁵ thus providing a further critical barrier for his strategy of protecting Hegelian conceptuality through devolution (from institutional realization to intersubjective negotiation). Pippin argues that Adorno's philosophy idles because he accepts "the separability of sensible and intellectual faculties that came under severe and sustained attack after Kant, above all in Hegel" (Pippin 2014a, p. 67). This is a bizarre claim. On even the most cursory reading of Adorno, he insists, first, "that nothing exists outside what is produced by human labor, that nothing whatsoever is completely independent of social labor" (Adorno 1993, p. 68), including those stretches of nature untouched directly by it. Adorno's "untouched" thesis is a version, from the perspective of social labor, of the idea that no phenomena are exempt from conceptual

⁵ More narrowly, Pippin is here actually dismissing Adorno's aesthetics; but since I am not directly addressing competing aesthetic theories, the broader characterization is more apt.

mediation. Hence, second, underpinning this claim is Adorno's direct acknowledgment of the necessity of conceptual mediation: "Consciousness is capable of seeing through the identity principle, but cannot think without [conceptually] identifying" (Adorno 1973, p. 149; trans. modified).⁶ And third, Adorno's central critical argument concerns precisely and emphatically the *inseparability* of sensible and intellectual faculties, and how the historic attempt, call it the dialectic of enlightenment, to produce a separation between concept and intuition, to create a duality of freedom and nature, subject and object, generates the amphibian problem that is the self-defeat of reason, a defeat that Adorno thinks terminates in the rationalization processes of modernity whose most terrible manifestations to date were the bureaucratic and industrialized deaths of human "specimens" in Auschwitz. What Pippin repudiates in Adorno is, in fact, Adorno's *direct* borrowing of the dialectic of enlightenment from Schiller and Hegel: Enlightenment reason has practically 'separated' what is ontologically inseparable. And that must matter to the analysis of the amphibian problem since Pippin's teasing account of adventures in other minds obfuscates and then suppresses the problem of nature with which it began.

III Anti-Theodicy

As a way of underlining the illegitimacy of Pippin's deflationary strategy, let me turn to Hegel's theodicy argument and Adorno's critique of it. Adorno takes the positivist (and now postmodernist) critique of the very idea of a philosophy of history as simply the blind denial that there are patterns and trends in history that go beyond particular facts, that some of those trends are more widespread and historically insistent than others. For Adorno, finally, the refusal to put into a historical context the most atrocious events involves an intellectual and political complacency that all but entails the repetition of their like. Adorno does not think we can simply ignore Hegel's philosophy of history while wanting to hold on to his other accomplishments, above all the criticisms of Kant.

Adorno's philosophy of history *is* Hegel's philosophy of history minus the theodicy (Hullot-Kentor 2006, pp. 36–7). In their extravagance, one might think the following two passages deserve one another.

⁶ Although any one of hundreds of passages would do, here is Adorno in high idealist mode: "Without concepts . . . experience would lack continuity. By definition, the part it [the concept] takes in the discursive medium makes it always more than individual" (Adorno 1973, p. 46).

Hegel:

Our investigation can be seen as a theodicy, a justification of the ways of God . . . It should enable us to comprehend all the ills of the world, including the existence of evil, so that the thinking spirit may be reconciled with the negative aspects of existence; and it is in world history that we encounter the sum total of concrete evil . . . A reconciliation of the kind just described can only be achieved through a knowledge of the affirmative side of history, in which the negative *is reduced to a subordinate position and transcended altogether*.

(Hegel VPG: 42–43)

Adorno:

Universal history must be construed and denied . . . No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb . . . It is horror that verifies Hegel and stands him on his head. If he transfigured the totality of historic suffering into the positivity of the self-realizing absolute, the One and All that keeps rolling on to this day – with occasional breathing spells – would teleologically be the absolute of suffering . . . The world spirit, a worthy object of definition, would have to be defined as permanent catastrophe.

(Adorno 1973, p. 320)

These are philosophically ugly passages. Hegel's philosophy of history is driven by the thought that no accomplishment of modernity is more philosophically, morally, and politically significant than the discovery that all human beings are free, that "man as such is free . . . the spiritual essence becomes conscious of itself and aware of its own nature" (Adorno 1993, p. 130). This discovery of freedom is not local and empirical, like the discovery of the Easter egg in the closet; it is an extended historical discovery in which alternative self-conceptions of the meaning of the human were defeated through their very effort at realization until our collective responsibility for the being and meaning of our social forms became unavoidable.

Nonetheless, the progress of history from freedom for *one* to *some* to *all* can only be a *theodicy* – a justification or rationalization or compensation for the slaughter-bench that brought it to pass – if modernity puts an end to the sacrificial logic of history. Otherwise the theodicy claim is empty. While life without suffering is unimaginable (call it, following Freud, ordinary unhappiness as opposed to pathological misery), Hegel must have thought that there was some intrinsic commensurability between the realization of freedom and relief from unnecessary, socially produced suffering. While one might well be skeptical about the idea that any historical achievement can vindicate past suffering not explicitly

undertaken for its sake, nonetheless the idea of theodicy functions as a rational reminder that present existence cannot detach itself utterly from past sufferings, which in turn makes the measure of whether present suffering is socially necessary or not rationally necessary. Theodicy is the clumsy but nonetheless pointed expression of the connection between human striving for meaning and the existence of unnecessary suffering. If a logic of sacrifice continues, if the process in which “every single progressive act is . . . brought about at the expense of individuals and groups who are thereby condemned to fall under the wheels” (Adorno 2006, p. 12) continues, then modernity merely repeats and is not the resolution and transcendence of the historical development leading up to it. Although Hegel ruefully and rightly mocks the effort of Kant’s postulates to square freedom (moral righteousness) with happiness as nothing but duplicity, his theodicy does no more than switch the Kantian logic into a historic gear without demonstrating how or why we should think progress in the *consciousness* of freedom from *one* to *some* to *all* should simultaneously vindicate past suffering and provide relief from its recurrence.

In response to the intransigence of existing social institutions, one quietistic temptation is to claim that we can come to know self-consciousness is intersubjectively constituted, and hence social, without the full achievement of rational society. This sounds overwhelmingly plausible. Here, however, is the hard Hegelian problem: How can reason *be* recognitive and reconciling without knowing what counts in practice, in actuality, as recognition and reconciliation? The assertion *that* we are recognitively constituted, and *that* we are living and more than living beings does not entail that we know *what* so being comes to or demands.⁷

One version of this conflation of knowing *that* versus knowing *what* that leads contemporary Hegelians to suppose they are entitled to some conception of the absolute idea without being bound to the outright implausibilities of Hegel’s historical theodicy or utopian bourgeois state is that they construe Hegel’s overcoming of Kant’s concept-intuition dualism as sufficient for Hegelian “absoluteness”; that is, the thesis “that [the] concept-intuition distinction is not strictly congruent with the distinction between spontaneity and receptivity, that there is an ‘active’ and even conceptual element in the sensible uptake of the world” (Pippin 2005a, p. 28) when appropriately socialized and historicized, because sufficient for overcoming skepticism should also be sufficient for normative guidance in practical encounters. But something must be going awry here: If we presume, as Hegel must, that human mindedness has never faced

⁷ Beyond knowing, if we do, the necessity and meaning of love.

unmediated manifolds, has never merely passively received materials that must undergo mindful shaping to be cognitively appreciated, then, at that level, the entirety of the historical process transpires within the bounds of Hegelian conceptuality. That there are no grounds for believing there are things-in-themselves permanently outside the bounds of human knowing does not entail, however, either that we are reconciled with nature, since the domination of instrumental rationality is now culturally actual, or, therefore, that the rationality appropriate for relations of recognition has been accomplished. Even if one establishes that we must be in relations of independence from and dependence on living nature, and that mindedness is an outgrowth of nature, it does not follow that we know what reconciliation with nature is without making the notion of reconciliation empty and formal, without historical structure or normative significance. Equally, that we must be in (some) relations of recognition with others as a necessary condition for being self-conscious agents at all does not entail that we know in any significant way what full social recognition involves; we do not.

Sometimes Hegel writes as if history was solely a cognitive affair, in the course of which we shed false philosophical views about who we are as spiritual beings in order to acquire better and truer ones. But, as the argumentation of the Spirit chapter of the *Phenomenology* powerfully demonstrates, cognitive learning goes hand in hand with emphatic re-formations of the *substance* of the human itself, with an actual process of social *Bildung*. We become different kinds of spiritual beings inhabiting differing spiritual worlds through interpreting ourselves differently. Hegel cannot do without this latter claim without forfeiting the entirety of his conception of self-consciousness and spirit. But once it is in place, then it follows that the amphibian problem caused by Kantian-capitalist modernity turns into the Adornoian diagnosis of the ills of modernity: We have socially suppressed and deformed to the point of practical invisibility our binding relations to nature and one another and now have no obvious path through which those relations may be retrieved.

Adorno's anti-theodicy is premised on the thought that the misfiring of modernity, the inability of the bourgeois revolution to become truly universal, is neither accidental nor contingent. It belongs to the logic of historical progress producing it that consciousness of freedom is not actualized in substantive political freedom (democratic self-determination), nor the benefits of bourgeois existence universalized. Adorno's rhetoric of world spirit as "permanent catastrophe" can mislead one into thinking that he is presenting a wholly negative philosophy of history; that would be mistaken. Adorno is unequivocal about the reality of historical progress: from hunting and gathering to industrialized agriculture, "from slavery to

formal freedom, from fear of demons to reason, from deprivation to provisions against epidemics and famine and to the overall improvement of living conditions" (Adorno 1998, p. 148). His thesis is not the denial of progress, but an interrogation into the character of that progress itself and how what was promised by it has been canceled.

Adorno argues that Hegel was right to comprehend history as unified by reason and that reason does rule the world; but it is just this unification and totalization by reason that abrogates the promise of reconciliation between mindedness and nature that is a necessary condition for the commensuration of freedom and happiness. Hence, it is not "Hegelian" reason, what Hegel thought reason to be, that is realized. Rather, it is the instrumental reason that Schiller and Hegel identified as the truth of Kantian reason that has become total: the dominating reason that "strips the world of its enlivened and flowering reality and dissolves it into abstractions," which in claiming autonomy from nature "retaliates on nature the distress and violence which it has suffered from it itself."

What grounds Adorno's anti-theodicy thesis is the claim that with Auschwitz we experience the negative theodicy of instrumental reason. Following Raymond Geuss's compact summary of Adorno's argument, we can say that instrumental reason is possessed of three defining characteristics: (i) Genuine knowledge is objectifying knowledge in that it succeeds *only* through setting up the object of knowledge as distinct and separate from the human knower, that is, by displacing the conceptual logic of part and whole with an emphatic subject-object structural dualism. (ii) Genuine knowledge proceeds through conceptual subsumption, that is, bringing features of objects under general concepts, and less general concepts (because overly determined by the empirical qualitative features of objects) under more general concepts until, ideally, human knowing is a unified, self-determined, and systematic whole. It is this that Adorno has in mind with his notion of identity thinking – nothing can stand outside the reach of reason without reason being put into question. It is equally this principle of identity that Hegel is criticizing in Kant. (iii) Genuine knowledge that satisfies conditions (i) and (ii) must, to be genuine, enable us to predict and, where our technological means are sufficient, enable us to manipulate and control the natural processes that are its object (Geuss 1999, p. 99). So understood, instrumental reason is the multivocal human capacity for reason and cognition narrowly tailored and constrained to satisfy the needs necessary for individual and collective self-preservation; hence, again, on Adorno's reading instrumental reason is the *drive* to self-preservation in rational form.

As Adorno further underlines, "the principle of self-preservation is itself irrational and particular if it is restricted to individuals, to the particular individual rationality of individuals" (Adorno 2004, p. 44). It is this very consideration that lies behind the great efforts of both Hobbes and Kant, however differently: They both seek to place "universalist" constraints on individual instrumental reasoning; in so doing, however, they in fact only raised instrumental reason to the level of universality.⁸ In fact, their efforts lagged behind the history determining them "because the self-preserving reason of the individual is converted [through its embodiment in social practices] into the self-preservation of the species, there is an intrinsic temptation for this universality to emancipate itself from the individuals it comprises" (Adorno 2004, p. 44). Instrumental reason – yoking together the demand for unity with the strategy of criticizing all anthropomorphisms – ascends to more encompassing principles of unity, and, at the same time, toward detachment from the individuals who are its bearers. It is, finally, this unified and emancipated instrumental reason that, *malgré lui*, Hegel announces as the rationality of the actual.

It is equally this formation of reason that informs modern scientific, industrial, technological, bureaucratic, economic, and moral practices. Adorno does not think that this reason, so emancipated, *must* terminate in Auschwitz or its like, that Auschwitz was, somehow, the inevitable outcome of this development; until human freedom disappears, historical determinism will remain a fantasy of retrospection. Rather, he argues, nothing within instrumental reason provides rational resources to resist such atrocities; more directly, the atrocities themselves radically depended on rationalized social practices; Auschwitz is the exemplary *social* realization of instrumental reason. As Enzo Traverso summarizes this claim: "The guillotine, the abattoir, the Fordist factory, and rational administration, along with racism, eugenics, the massacres of the colonial wars and those of World War I had already fashioned the social universe and the mental landscape in which the Final Solution would be conceived and set in motion" (Traverso 2003, p. 151).

What now can be said to make world spirit a "permanent catastrophe" is that – despite the all-too-evident discontinuities that are the actuality of diverse lives in diverse societies throughout history – there have also occurred insistent processes of development in the power of instrumental reason and the domination of nature and that growth in our power to know and dominate nature is what unifies and makes continuous the

⁸ For an effort to demonstrate that Kantian moral reason is a version of instrumental reason, see Bernstein 2001, ch. 3. For a demonstration that the model of autonomous reason, reason as fully detached from the natural world and fully self-determining, leads to the dissolution of the very form of subjectivity it promises, see Shuster 2014.

“progress” of history.⁹ Because this continuity in the midst of ever-present historical discontinuity is determined by the drive for identity that is a product of the drive for self-preservation, history is not yet truly history; its repetitions and demands for unity and conformity are those of cyclic and mechanical nature as it has been produced by identity thinking; it “perpetuates the blind growth of nature.”¹⁰ Again, this is the gist of Hegel’s and Schiller’s own claim: “We disown Nature in her rightful sphere only to submit to her tyranny in the moral, and while resisting the impact she makes upon our senses are content to take over her principles.”

IV Conclusion: Whither Reconciliation?

When a particular exceeds the determinations of its cover concept, Adorno will speak of the “nonidentity” of concept and object. “Nonidentity” thus names the difference between experiences open to determinate negation, and hence open to further transformations of our self-understanding of concept and object, further forms of conceptual determination, and, on the other hand, ones emphatically foreclosed within a false totality (false because it poses itself as historically closed, and is not truly universal because not determined by principles of rational freedom). Determinate negation is *social* critique because it involves the collapse of a universalizing form of consciousness, a universalizing social practice, in which a particular regime of a concept of an object in general disintegrates under the weight of its own commitment to actualization. Because the failure is of a universalizing conception of the relation between self and world, what collapses is (some integral part of) a form of life as a whole. Determinate negation embraces the failure of actualization as the only form of progress that does not halt before the rational identity of the object has been expressed; the practice of determinate negation operates a progressive movement because, whether embraced or resisted (which is where ideology enters as cognitive insulation), it is driven by a commitment to objectivity and truth.

The triumph of identity thinking, of instrumental rationality, its creating of an untrue totality, occurs because the rule of reason in late modernity extinguishes the progressive logic of determinate negation through its procedure of theoretical and practical *reduction*: Instrumental reason actualizes the fit between concept and object by *eliminating* from the object whatever falls outside the demands of the rationalized concept.

⁹ See Adorno 2006, pp. 91–2 for evidence that this is all he meant by that misleading phrase.

¹⁰ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 141.

If the great achievements of mathematical physics are the zenith of this reductive practice, its mechanism of stripping from the particular its particularity reached its nadir in Auschwitz: "in the concentration camps it was no longer an individual who died, but a specimen" (Adorno 1973, p. 362). What this is emblematic of is the "indifference of each individual life that is the direction of history. Even in his formal freedom, the individual is as fungible and replaceable as he will be under the liquidators' boots" (Adorno 1973, p. 362). This "direction of history" is what Adorno sees as the triumph of capital over democracy; of exchange value over use value; of bureaucracy, technology, and scientific reason over competing social formations of reason. Perhaps this way of stating the issue sounds exorbitant; Adorno holds to it because he does not perceive in our historical present any sense of it as a moment of *transition*, a sense of it as driving toward experiences of determinate negation, experiences of it as a transient framework of reason despite the manifest irrationalities of growing inequality, the persistence of socially unnecessary poverty, hunger, and suffering, the depletion of natural resources, planetary warming, a continued weakening of democratic controls over the economy.

It is this experience of historical foreclosure, of liberal capitalist modernity as perennial, that is the critical conundrum of Adorno's thinking: How can there be an openness to determinate negation when the formation of rational modernity has so successfully reduced object to concept that experience, in Hegel's radical sense, has withered, when the object appears to go into the concept without remainder (or the current equivalent: "there is no alternative")? More precisely, then, what has withered almost to the point of disappearance in rational modernity is reconciling reason itself.

Adorno's great effort was to argue that the problem of particularity, and hence the connection between reconciling freedom and nature, on the one hand, and installing the rationality appropriate to relations of recognition on the other requires a conceptuality that includes some version of mimetic activity, some robust squaring of the claims of sensuous particularity with the demands of conceptuality, for it is only the moment of sensuous particularity in the concept that acknowledges the abiding of nature in spirit. The amphibian problem is, then, the key to the problem of recognition because others on whom one depends are living, sensuously particular others; and they, those particular others, cannot be *recognized* unless and until their living sensuous particularity is recognized, intimately here and now, and generally as members of a form of objective spirit in which their being living, sensuously particular individuals counts. The difficulty Adorno unearths is that the

forms of objective spirit of late modernity make such counting impossible, and that fact must infiltrate, form, and deform even our most intimate relations to others. And that should be enough to underline Adorno's abiding thesis: Only a *reconciling* of spiritual life with nature can answer to the amphibian status of the human.

12 Comedy between the Ugly and the Sublime

Slavoj Žižek

Art, religion, and (philosophical) science are for Hegel the three progressive modes of the (self-)appearance of the Absolute, and the first problem here is that this progression does not quite work: The three terms are not at the same level. The pairing of art and thinking has a long tradition, reaching back to Heidegger's *Dichten und Denken*, but why is religion added as a separate entity? Hegel himself often treats art and religion as aspects of the same self-deploying entity – for example, ancient Greek art is for him religion in the form of art, religion that finds its appropriate expression in art. Religion intervenes here as an uncanny intruder, a monstrosity of the supernatural in natural terms. Should the starting point not be religion rather than art? Was what we today consider art not historically first part of a religious or sacred experience? And is not the emergence of art in its independence, and not as part of the experience of the sacred – a process that reaches its peak only in modernity – strictly correlative to the rise of philosophy and (later) science as an autonomous mode of thinking no longer rooted in religion? Is, then, the pairing of *Dichten und Denken* itself the outcome of the withdrawal of religious experience?

The progress from art through religion to science moves in the direction of *Ver-Innerung*, of recollection or internalization: It ends when the Spirit no longer needs the external medium of *Vorstellung* to express itself but deals with itself directly in the form of Spirit. This is why every preoccupation with deep mysteries, with unfathomable secrets to be disclosed to the initiated, and so forth is a sign that Spirit has not yet truly found itself: "The spirit only occupies itself with objects so long as there is something secret, not revealed, in them" (VPA II, 234/I, 604). This is why, from a Hegelian standpoint, one should reject absolutely the Schellingian and Heideggerian topic of an impenetrable, self-withdrawing Ground (*Erde*, Earth, in Heidegger). Both of them insist on the unsurpassable character of man's finitude: Because of this finitude, we are forever caught in a struggle; we can never reach the Absolute at peace with itself (and this also holds for the Absolute itself, which is caught in this struggle).

And, from the Hegelian standpoint, one should also reject Schiller's and Schelling's assertion of art as higher than philosophy as the only adequate rendering of the Absolute, of the harmonious identity of subject and object, ideal and real, freedom and necessity, reflection and spontaneity, activity and passivity (in contrast to philosophy or rational thinking, which privileges the subject and reflection).

According to Hegel's (in)famous diagnosis, with the rise of modernity, "the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the spirit." Even if excellent works are produced, "we bow the knee no longer" (VPA I, 142/I, 103). This thesis of Hegel's acquired new content with the rise of what he could not forecast: the secular capitalist civilization that elevates scientific reason into the highest form of reason (not in the Hegelian sense of *Wissenschaft*, but in the Anglo-Saxon sense of positive science relying on experiments). Today, with the emergence of cognitivism and the brain sciences, the circle is somehow closed; the human mind itself has become an object of neurobiology; and although the representatives of the experimental sciences as a rule dismiss Hegel's thought as the high point of speculative madness, as an artistic-obscurantist phenomenon that has nothing to do with science proper, Hegel's thesis that art is no longer the supreme expression of spirit survives this scathing critique. Even cognitivists who admire art or frequently refer to it (Sacks, Damasio) do so in a benevolently condescending attitude – what matters is science, not art.

The Romantic reaction to modern scientific civilization invites us "to bend the knee anew" (as Pippin [2014a, p. 139] wrote apropos of Heidegger); in what is today often referred to as the "postsecular" spirit, it endeavors to reenchant reality, and to elevate art into (one of) the harbinger(s) of the ultimate truth about our lives inaccessible to science. (Another strategy is, of course, to search in the latest sciences themselves for the signs of their overcoming of the "mechanistic paradigm.") One should be unambiguous here: Such reenchantments are a fake, a pleasing aesthetic game.

With Hegel against Hegel

So what are we to do? Robert Pippin's goal in his *After the Beautiful* is "to see what Hegel missed, but see it in *his* terms" (Pippin 2014a, p. 61). The problem with this approach is, of course, how to avoid the naive and thoroughly pre-Hegelian distinction between an empirical, "historical Hegel" and the "true Hegel," the Hegel true to his notion, or rather, at the level of his notion: Is not, for Hegel, the historical actualization of a notion its truth, the deployment of its actual potentials, so that his mode

of thinking totally prohibits all reference to an ideal over against its historical realization? The fundamental limitation of the “historical Hegel,” the “blind spot in his treatment of modernity,” is formulated by Pippin in proto-Marxist terms: It is his “failure to anticipate the dissatisfactions that this ‘prosaic’ world . . . would generate, or his failure to appreciate that there might be a basic form of disunity or alienation that his project could not account for, for which there was no ‘sublation’ or overcoming yet on the horizon” (p. 46).

For Pippin, Hegel’s thought involves another limitation, which concerns the form of art itself; his conclusion – the end of art in its essential role – “is not motivated by anything essential in Hegel’s account and represents a misstep, not an inference consistent with Hegel’s overall project” (pp. 22–3). So when Hegel correctly claims that in our age, “art invites us to intellectual consideration” (VPA I, 26/I, 11), he undermines the notion of art as intuitive and affecting, opening up the possibility of a different kind of art, an art that is “explicitly self-reflexive and exploratory” (Pippin 2014a, p. 42), involving interpretive effort. (And, incidentally, the counterpart of this reflexivization of art is that philosophy itself becomes “artistic.”) The bad luck with so-called conceptual art (which seems a perfect example of “art inviting us to intellectual consideration”) is that, as a rule, it works only as *hapax*: You do it once, you make your point, and it is over (there is only one *pissoir* for Duchamp, only one white square on black surface with Malevitch; we gain nothing by repeating the production of such objects). Hegel’s fateful limitation was thus that his notion of art remained within the confines of classical representative art. He was unable to consider the possibility of what we call abstract (nonfigurative) art (or atonal music, or literature that reflexively focuses on its own process of writing, etc.).

The truly interesting question here is in what way this limitation – remaining within the constraints of the classical notion of representative art – is linked to what Pippin views as Hegel’s other limitation, his inability to detect the alienation/antagonism that persists even in a modern rational society where individuals attain their formal freedom and mutual recognition. In what way – and *why* – can this persisting unfreedom/uneasiness/dislocation in a modern free society only be properly articulated, brought to light, in an art that is no longer constrained to the representative model? Is it that the modern uneasiness, unfreedom in the very form of formal freedom, servitude in the very form of autonomy, and more fundamentally anxiety and perplexity caused by that very autonomy reach so deep into the very ontological foundations of our being that it can only be expressed in an art form that destabilizes and denaturalizes the most elementary coordinates of our sense of reality?

The very fact that art plays a key role within an epoch means that in this epoch Spirit is not reconciled with itself – this is why it still needs sensual embodiment (in a work of art). Consequently, Hegel prophesied the end of art because he failed to perceive radical antagonisms that persist in the apparently nonantagonistic self-reconciled bourgeois society where individuals are condemned to lead a prosaic everyday life. However, Pippin's critique of the Hegelian reconciliation in a modern rational state is deeply ambiguous: Does the persistence of art mean that art – authentic and relevant art – is only possible in an unreconciled society, as it sounds when Pippin emphasizes that Hegel did not see the antagonism in modern society and links this failure to the persistence of art? (Recall the modernist dream of a reconciled society in which art disappears as a separate institution since it overlaps with real everyday life itself.) Or is it that art persists in its very concept even in a fully reconciled society? Or – a third option – is it that the persistence of art signals that reconciliation is not possible for a priori reasons?

What one should further bear in mind is that the Hegelian reconciliation is ultimately the reconciliation with failure itself, not a peaceful state in which antagonisms are overcome. The illusion is not that of the enforced “false” reconciliation that ignores the persisting divisions; the true illusion resides in not seeing that, in what appears to us as the chaos of becoming, the infinite goal *is already realized*: “Within the finite, we cannot experience or see that the purpose is truly attained. To accomplish the infinite purpose is thus merely to sublimate the illusion [or deception: *Täuschung*] that it is not yet accomplished” (EL §212 Z). In short, the ultimate deception is to fail to see that one already has what one is looking for – like Christ's disciples who were awaiting his “real” reincarnation, blind to the fact that their collective already was the Holy Spirit, the return of the living Christ.

Returning to Pippin, the dissatisfaction in modern prosaic life is what modern art (in painting from Manet to Cézanne, Picasso, etc.) registers. So, again, Hegel's “greatest failure” is that he

never seemed very concerned about [the] potential instability in the modern world, about citizens of the same ethical commonwealth potentially losing *so* much common ground and common confidence that a general irresolvability of any of these possible conflicts becomes ever more apparent, the kind of high challenge and low expectations we see in all those vacant looks . . . He does not worry much because of his general theory about the gradual actual historical achievement of some mutual recognitive status, a historical claim that has come to look like the least plausible aspect of Hegel's account and that is connected with our resistance to his proclamations about art as a thing of the past. (Pippin 2014a, p. 60)

And Pippin himself designates as the core of this new dissatisfaction class division and struggle (here, of course, class is to be opposed to castes, estates, and other hierarchies). A fundamental ambiguity thus characterizes the disturbing and disorienting effect of Manet's paintings: Yes, they indicate the "alienation" of modern individuals who lack a proper place within a society traversed by radical antagonisms, individuals deprived of the intersubjective space of collective mutual recognition and understanding; however, they simultaneously generate and reflect a liberating effect (individuals they depict appear as no longer bound to a specific place in the social hierarchy), as well as an immanently artistic progress in freedom as reflexive awareness of the activity one is involved in. In other words, the modern, prosaic world is the world of the rational state, freedom, and mutual recognition (even if this freedom is merely formal, masking deeper class antagonisms), while the premodern universe is the world of hierarchic nonmutual order. Nicolas Bourriaud wrote in his introduction to Foucault's booklet on Manet:

What vouches for Manet's painting is the definite birth of an individual exiled from his certainties regarding his place in the world . . . The viewer is commanded to position himself as an autonomous subject, lacking the possible means to identify himself or to project himself into the artwork he confronts. (Bourriaud 2009, pp. 16–17)

For Pippin, the most direct sign of this disorientation is the perplexed gaze of the painted individual, an expression characterized as one of "looking without seeing." The gaze is directed outside the frame, addressing us viewers, but we are treated "as if invisible or at the least irrelevant, occupying no important presence in the subject's vacant or bemused look" (Pippin 2014a, p. 48). With this perplexed gaze, Manet is not just a precursor to impressionism; he effectively reaches beyond impressionism and points toward modern art proper (expressionism and abstract painting). The perplexed gaze of the painted individual thus unsettles the viewer as well, making his/her gaze uncertain, simultaneously dislocated (moving, looking at the painting from more than one standpoint since what he sees is impossible to see from one standpoint) and fixed into the unpleasantly exposed position of a voyeur.

However, there is more lurking beneath the surface here. In *The Luncheon on the Grass*, Manet's best-known painting, we see two couples, including two naked women, one in back, knee-deep in water, engaged in what appears a kind of postcoital cleansing (this association was often noted), and a nude in front just sitting on the grass with the expression of "looking but not seeing." With whom did the one in back have sex, the silent man or the talking, gesticulating one? Visually, the nude in front

and the silent man sitting behind her are a couple, so it must be that the talking man is the one who performed the act and is not flirting with the other woman – or is he covering up his failure to perform the act by his excessive activity? The situation remains ambiguous, but the perplexed, distracted gaze of the naked woman in front remains the gaze of a (sexually) nonsatisfied woman, so that the painting's subtitle could well have been *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*.

Far from being excessive, this reading is confirmed by the general feature of Manet's nude paintings. They are clearly to be conceived as a repetition of classical desexualized nude paintings – a repetition with a twist, of course, that is, what matters is the difference with regard to the classical model. Manet's nude *Olympia* (1863–1865) repeats *Reclining Venus* (Ingres, 1822), and what this repetition renders palpable is “the impossibility (under the emerging conditions of a capitalist society's self-representation) of any continuation of the tradition of the nude in painting, the impossibility, the immediate lack of credibility, of that abstraction from particularity, the desexualizing idealization and so relatively innocent address to the beholder” (Pippin 2014a, p. 77). In short, Manet's *Olympia* “is not a nude; she is a naked individual” (ibid.). The same bodily position of the left hand (covering the vaginal area) in Ingres indicates tender shame, while in Manet it designates a prostitute's repose and is as such vulgarly eroticized. All the obscenity of class, power, and sex brutally invade the space of the painting, and it is crucial to note that the effect of the repetition of Ingres in Manet is retroactive; it is not only that Ingres's *Venus* is replaced by a prostitute, it is that Ingres's *Venus* itself loses its innocence and becomes (visible as) a prostitute.

A further feature that manifests this irruption of obscenity in *Olympia* is the disturbing effect of its light. As Foucault pointed out, there is no discernible source of light within the space depicted by the painting, so that it is as if light emanates directly from us, the viewers. Our gaze at *Olympia* is the source of the extra-strong light, which means that our possessive erotic gaze makes her visible – in short, we are her customers, our looking at her is like the look of the tourists or potential customers at the prostitutes displayed in the windows in Amsterdam's Red Light district. This brings us back to the topic of the gaze and its vicissitudes in painting. Hegel is fully aware of the disruptive power of the gaze, its exceptional status in the totality of a human body. For Hegel, the form of a human body is

a totality of organs into which the Concept is dispersed, and it manifests in each member only some particular activity and partial emotion. But if we ask in which particular organ the whole soul appears as soul, we will at once name the eye; for in the eye the soul is concentrated and the soul does not merely see through it but is also seen in it. Now as the pulsating heart shows itself all over the surface of the

human, in contrast to the animal, body, so in the same sense it is to be asserted of art that it has to convert every shape in all points of its visible surface into an eye, which is the seat of the soul and brings the spirit into appearance. – Or, as Plato cries out to the star in his familiar distich: “When thou lookest on the stars, my star, oh! would I were the heavens and could see thee with a thousand eyes,” so, conversely, art makes every one of its productions into a thousand-eyed Argus, whereby the inner soul and spirit is seen at every point. And it is not only the bodily form, the look of the eyes, the countenance and posture, but also actions and events, speech and tones of voice, and the series of their course through all conditions of appearance that art has everywhere to make into an eye, in which the free soul is revealed in its inner infinity. (VPA I, 203–4/I, 153–4)

The weird thing is that the image of the thousand-eyed Argus “is not one of the beautiful but is rather monstrous, ugly even” (Pippin 2014a, p. 101); so how can such an outstandingly ugly image stand for the metaphor of how a beautiful work of art functions?¹

Let us proceed step by step. First, why *many* eyes? From the Freudian standpoint, only one answer is possible. In the same way that, according to Freud, the image of multiple penises in a dream signal castration (of the One), thousands of eyes cannot but signal the castration of the (one) Gaze. And the same goes for social life: The principal antagonism, when foreclosed or excluded, returns as a multiplicity. Does the same not hold for class antagonism, which, when occluded by the appearance of class balance (collaboration, mutual support, and complementarity – the corporate vision of society as a social body where every organ has its proper role to play), returns in the multiplicity of social separations and hierarchies? (The same goes for the statues and paintings of Indian gods and goddesses with dozens of hands – what this signals is the lack of the one real Hand.) Bourgeois society generally obliterates castes and other hierarchies, equalizing all individuals as market-subjects divided only by class difference, but today’s late capitalism, with its “spontaneous” ideology, endeavors to obliterate the class division itself by proclaiming us all “self-entrepreneurs,” the differences among us being merely quantitative (a big capitalist borrows hundreds of millions for his investment, a poor worker borrows a couple of thousand for his supplementary education). The expected outcome is that other divisions and hierarchies emerge: experts and nonexperts; full citizens and the excluded; religious, sexual, and other minorities. Therein resides the lie of humanist universalism – or, as Carl Schmitt stated it brutally: “Whoever invokes ‘humanity’ wants to cheat” (Schmitt 1996 [1932], p. 54). *Cheating* here means simply

¹ One can thus conceive cubism as a kind of inverted Argus: In it, the painting presents an object (say, a human body) as if it is simultaneously viewed from multiple standpoints. In this sense, in cubism the viewer/holder himself becomes a multi-eyed Argus.

obfuscating the antagonism in the very core of “humanity” (and thus covertly taking part by way of privileging one side in the antagonism).

The Ugly Gaze

So let us return to the (ugly) gaze that emanates from the painting, the way the painting we are looking at “returns the gaze.” Insofar as this gaze, the blind spot of the painting, is an ugly “phallic” protuberance, an excess that disturbs the painting’s harmony (as is the case with Holbein’s *Ambassadors*, where the blind spot is the ugly, prolonged anamorphic stain in the lower part of the painting), a work of art has to obfuscate this stain in its very heart if it is to become beautiful. This, for Lacan, is beauty – the domesticated ugliness of the gaze. The painter

gives something for the eye to feed on, but he invites the person to whom this picture is presented to lay down his gaze there as one lays down one’s weapons. This is the pacifying, Apollonian effect of painting. Something is given not so much to the gaze as to the eye, something that involves the abandonment, the *laying down*, of the gaze. (Lacan 1978, p. 101)

Gaze disturbing, ugly. “The problem is that a whole side of painting – expressionism – is separated from this field” (Lacan 1978, p. 101).

The image of thousand-eyed Argus is not the only case of ugliness in ancient Greece. There is (at least) also the (in)famous gigantic statue (the “colossus of Rhodes”) that stood above the entrance to the port; it was considered so disgusting with its large genitals and so on that it was taken as a divine punishment when a storm destroyed it. Where does this ugliness in ancient Greek art come from?

An answer is provided by Hegel, who does not conceive the ancient Greek miracle as emerging out of nowhere, but is fully aware of the violence of the break with preceding tradition that enabled it. The Greeks

certainly received the substantial beginnings of their religion, culture, their common bonds of fellowship, more or less from Asia, Syria and Egypt; but they have so greatly obliterated [*getilgt*] the foreign nature of this origin, and it is so much changed, worked upon, turned round, and altogether made so different, that what they, as we, prize, know, and love in it, is essentially their own . . . The foreign origin they have so to speak thanklessly [*undankbar*] forgotten, putting it in the background – perhaps burying it in the darkness of the mysteries which they have kept secret [*geheim*] from themselves. They have not only done this, that is they have not only used and enjoyed all that they have brought forth and formed, but they have become aware of and thankfully [*dankbar*] and joyfully placed before themselves this at-homeness [*Heimatlichkeit*] in their whole existence, the ground and origin of themselves. (VGP I, 174/I, 150–1)

So there is nothing new for Hegel in the “Black Athena” thesis. As Rebecca Comay has noted, he even describes the way Greek art relates to its predecessors in terms of a “conquering” (*siegen*), “repression” (*zurückdrängen*), “abolition” (*fortfallen*), “expunging” (*tilgen*), “annihilation” (*vertilgen*), “effacement” (*Auslöschung*), “erasure” (*Verwischung*), “stripping away” (*Abstreifung*), “excision” (*abschneiden*), “concealment” (*verstricken*) – of what? Of “the ‘Orient’ or its prehistoric avatar – animal, bodily, ugly, stupid” (Comay 2014, p. 126).

The notion of the Greek miracle as the outcome of organic spontaneous self-generation is thus an illusion grounded on brutal repression – and, as always with Hegel, these repressed origins return in the fatal flaw of classic Greek art that is the obverse of its very achievement. And we should not be surprised to learn that this repression takes the form of the exclusion of the gaze. A Greek statue is the perfect human form, the balance of body and spirit – however, as such, it has to be *without gaze*: Their eyes are flat, pure surfaces, not the punctual window into the depth of the soul, since such a crack in the bodily surface would disturb its unity, its harmonious beauty. This is why Greek statues do not yet display subjectivity proper:

If we compare this vocation of romantic art with the task of classical art, fulfilled in the most adequate way by Greek sculpture, the plastic shape of the gods does not express the movement and activity of the spirit which has retired into itself out of its corporeal reality and made its way to inner self-awareness . . . What [these sculptures] lack is the actuality of self-aware subjectivity in the knowing and willing of itself. This defect is shown externally in the fact that the expression of the soul in its simplicity, namely the light of the eye, is absent from the sculptures. The supreme works of beautiful sculpture are sightless, and their inner being does not look out of them as self-knowing inwardness in this spiritual concentration which the eye discloses. This light of the soul falls outside them and belongs to the spectator alone; when he looks at these shapes, soul cannot meet soul nor eye eye. (VPA II, 131–2/I, 520–1)

However, as we have just seen, within Greek art itself, this excluded (foreclosed even) excess of gaze returns as a disturbing multitude: The whole body of a Greek statue becomes a surface with hundreds of eyes. But it is only in later Romantic art that this excess returns. Modern subjectivity is the return of the monstrous dimension excluded from the ancient Greek harmonious art. This is why the category of beauty is no longer central for modern art: In it, we pass from the Beautiful to (different modalities of) the Sublime.

The passage from Greek beauty to the Christian sublime and then to the outright explosion of the Ugly as an aesthetic category was first systematically deployed by Karl Rosenkranz, editor and scholar of Hegel, author

of his first “official” biography, although himself a reluctant Hegelian, in his *Ästhetik des Häßlichen* (Aesthetics of the ugly²). Rosenkranz’s starting point is the historical process of the gradual abandonment of the unity of True, Good, and Beautiful: Not only can something ugly be true and good, but ugliness can be an immanent aesthetic notion, that is, an object can be ugly and an aesthetic object, an object of art. Rosenkranz remains within the long tradition from Homer onward that associates physical ugliness with moral monstrosity; for him, the ugly is *das Negativschöne* (the negatively beautiful): “The pure image of the Beautiful arises, shining all the more against the dark background/foil of the Ugly” (Rosenkranz 1853, p. 36). Rosenkranz here distinguishes between a “healthy” and a “pathological” mode of enjoying the Ugly in a work of art: To be aesthetically enjoyable and, as such, edifying and permissible, ugliness has to remain as a foil of the beautiful – ugliness for the sake of itself is a pathological enjoyment of art.

Ugliness is as such immanent to Beauty, a moment of the latter’s self-development. Like every concept, Beauty contains its opposite within itself, and Rosenkranz provides a systematic Hegelian deployment of all the modalities of the Ugly, from the formless chaos to the perverted distortions of the Beautiful. The basic matrix of his conceptualization of the Ugly is the triad of the Beautiful, the Ugly, and the Comical, where the Ugly serves as the middle, the intermediate moment, between the Beautiful and the Comical: “A caricature pushes something particular over its proper measure and creates thereby a disproportion which, insofar as it recalls its ideal counterpart, becomes comical” (Rosenkranz 1853, p. 145).³

A whole series of issues arises here. First, can this third term not also be conceived as the Sublime, insofar as the ugly in its chaotic and overwhelming monstrosity that threatens to destroy the subject recalls its opposite, the indestructible fact of Reason and of the moral law? The Sublime can appear (turn into) ridiculous, and the ridiculous can appear (turn into) sublime, as we learned from Chaplin’s late films.

Second, the notion of the Ugly as the foil for the appearance of the Beautiful is profoundly ambiguous. It can be read (as it is by Rosenkranz) in the traditional Hegelian way: The Ugly is the subordinated moment in the game the Beautiful is playing with itself, its immanent self-negation which lays the (back)ground for its full appearance. Or it can be read in

² *Hässlich*: ugly and, literally, worthy of hatred, that which provokes hatred, “hateable.”

³ Rosenkranz strangely ignores Hegel in his book on the Ugly, although Hegel points the way toward the *Ästhetik des Häßlichen* when he conceives Romantic art as the art that liberates subjectivity in its contingency (ugliness) and culminates in humor as a way to assume the ugly.

a much stronger, literal sense, as the very (back)ground of the Beautiful, which precedes the Beautiful and out of which the Beautiful arises. This is the reading proposed by Adorno in his *Aesthetic Theory*: “If there is any causal connection at all between the beautiful and the ugly, it is from the ugly as cause to the beautiful as effect, and not the other way around. If one originated in the other, it is beauty that originated in the ugly and not the reverse” (Adorno 1984a, p. 75). Adorno’s point here is twofold. First, concerning the notion of art, the Ugly is the “archaic” or “primitive” chaotic (Dionysian) life substance that a work of art “gentrifies,” elevates into the aesthetic form, but the price for this is the mortification of the life substance. The Ugly is the force of life against the death imposed by the aesthetic form. Second, with reference specifically to the modern era in which the Ugly became an aesthetic category, Adorno claims that art has to deal with the Ugly “in order to denounce, in the Ugly, the world which created it and reproduces it in its image” (Adorno 1984a, p. 72). The underlying premise here is that art is a medium of truth, not just an escapist play of beautiful appearances. In a historical situation in which the Beautiful is irreparably discredited as kitsch, it is only by presenting the Ugly in its ugliness that art can keep open the utopian horizon of Beauty.

A third point that arises is, what if the reversal of the Ugly into the Comical (or the Sublime) does not occur? Herman Parret describes such an option with regard to the Kantian Sublime: If the overwhelming pressure of the Ugly gets too strong, it becomes monstrous and can no longer be sublated/negated into the Sublime.

There is for Kant a progression from the colossal to the *monstrous*, i.e. towards the total annihilation of our faculty of presentation. If the colossal can already be considered a sublime correlate, then it remains certainly inside an acceptable limit; with the monstrous, on the other hand, one has passed beyond the acceptable limit, in full terror and total unpleasure. With the monstrous we are in the margin of the acceptable where the imagination is fully blocked to function. It looks as if the monstrous is the Thing, inexpressible and abyssal. The monstrous does violence to subjectivity without submitting it to any legality. (Parret 2009, p. 4)

The Sublime pleasure is a pleasure in unpleasure, while the Monstrous generates only unpleasure – but, as such, it provides enjoyment (*Genuss*, *jouissance*). Therein resides the link between enjoyment and disgust:

The “disgust for the object” arises from a certain “enjoyment” [*Genuss*] in the “matter of sensation” which distances the subject from its purposiveness. Pleasure [*Lust*] is opposed to “enjoyment” insofar as “pleasure is culture” [*wo die Lust zugleich Kultur ist*] ... “Enjoyment” in *mater*, in contrast, provokes disgust. In addition, this enjoyment of losing oneself in the matter of “charms and emotions” has a direct impact on the health of our body: it

generates disgust which manifests itself in corporeal reactions like nausea, vomiting and convulsions. Pleasure-unpleasure [*Lust/Unlust*] in the feeling of the sublime has nothing to do with that “enjoyment” [*Genuss*] destructive of culture and generative of disgust. (Parret 2009, p. 7)

Do we not get here even an echo of what Kristeva calls “abject” (Kristeva 1982)? The object of enjoyment is by definition *disgusting*, and what makes it disgusting is a weird superego injunction that appears to emanate from it, a call to enjoy it even if (and precisely because) we find it ugly and desperately try to resist being dragged into it:

Kant insists on the non-representability of ugliness in art: “[in] *disgust* . . . that strange sensation, which rests on nothing but imagination, the object is presented *as if* it insisted, *as it were*, on our enjoying it even though that is just what we are forcefully resisting.” This is a typically Kantian approach: in a single phrase, there is a *gleichsam* (*as it were*) and an *als ob* (*as if*). The ugly object has no reasonable effect on the *Gemüth*. Instead, an excited and dangerously disconcerted imagination petrifies the subject *in its corporeity*. This is the very essence of disgusting ugliness: it threatens the stability of our corporeity, our body “forcefully resists” the incitement to enjoy that ugliness deceitfully imposes on us. (Parret 2009, pp. 6–7)

This, finally, brings us to the heart of disgust: The object of disgust “threatens the stability of our corporeity”; it destabilizes the line that separates the inside of our body from its outside. Disgust arises when the border that separates the inside of our body from its outside is violated, when the inside penetrates out, as in the case of blood or excrement. It is similar with saliva: As we all know, although we can without problem swallow our own saliva, we find it repulsive to swallow again saliva that was spit into a glass out of our body – again a case of violating the Inside/Outside frontier. What distinguishes man from animals is that, with humans, the disposal of excrement becomes a problem – not because it has a bad smell, but because it came out from our innermost. We are ashamed of excrement because, in it, we expose/externalize our innermost intimacy. Animals do not have a problem with it because they do not have an “interior” as do humans. One should refer here to Otto Weininger, who designated volcanic lava as “the shit of the earth” (*Die Lava ist der Dreck der Erde*). It comes from *inside* the body, and this inside is evil, criminal: “The Inner of the body is very criminal” (*Das Innere des Körpers ist sehr verbrecherisch*) (Weininger 1997, pp. 187, 188).

There Are Comedies and Comedies

How, then, can we think with Hegel against Hegel apropos of art after Beauty? Pippin is right to point out that in his proclamation of the end of

art (as the highest expression of the absolute), Hegel is paradoxically *not idealist enough*. What Hegel fails to see is not simply some post-Hegelian dimension totally outside his grasp, but precisely the “Hegelian” dimension of the analyzed phenomenon. The same goes for economy: What Marx demonstrated in his *Capital* is how the self-reproduction of the capital obeys the logic of the Hegelian dialectical process of a substance-subject that retroactively posits its own presuppositions. However, Hegel himself missed this dimension – his notion of industrial revolution was the Adam Smith-type manufacture where the work process is still that of combined individuals using tools, not yet the factory in which the machinery sets the rhythm and individual workers are de facto reduced to organs serving the machinery to its appendices. This is why Hegel could not yet imagine the way abstraction rules in developed capitalism. This abstraction is not only in our (financial speculator’s) misperception of social reality; it is “real” in the precise sense of determining the structure of the material social processes themselves. The fate of whole strata of a population, and sometimes that of whole countries, can be decided by the “solipsistic” speculative dance of capital, which pursues its goal of profitability in blessed indifference to how its movement will affect social reality. Therein resides the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism, much more uncanny than the direct precapitalist socio-ideological violence. This violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their “evil” intentions, but purely “objective,” systemic, anonymous.

And in exact homology to this reign of abstraction in capitalism, Hegel was paradoxically not idealist enough to imagine the reign of abstraction in art. That is to say, in the same way that in the domain of economy he was unable to discern the self-mediating Notion that structures the economic reality of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption, Hegel was unable to discern the Notional content of a painting that mediates and regulates its form (shapes, colors) at a level that is more basic than the content represented (pictured) by a painting – “abstract painting” mediates/reflects sensuality at a nonrepresentative level:

seeing abstraction as self-conscious, conceptual, not, as with Greenberg, reductionist and materialist. Pollocks and Rothkos are not presentations of paint drips and color fields and flat canvas. They conceptualize components of sensible meaning that we traditionally would not see and understand as such, would treat as given, and this can make sense because the result character of even sensible apprehension, a generalized idealism evident even in the likes of Nietzsche and Proust, has come to be part of the intellectual habits of mind of modern self-understanding, even if unattended to as such. Such is for Hegel the new way nonrepresentational art might matter. (Pippin 2002b, p. 23)

Exemplary here is Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, which explores how colors, forms, points, lines, and their interplay directly evoke spiritual inner life (pure emotions), bypassing representative content. One should bear in mind here the gap that separates authentic art from mere decorative art. Nonfigurative decorative art also displays the interplay of forms and colors, but this interplay is not a purveyor of a deeper historical Truth. While Kandinsky's text is full of naive theosophical theses, two of his points nonetheless hit the mark, bearing witness to the fact that what he calls "Spiritual" is also Spirit in the Hegelian sense. First, the progress of art stands for the progress in freedom: "The greatest freedom of all, the freedom of an unfettered art, can never be absolute. Every age achieves a certain measure of this freedom, but beyond the boundaries of its freedom the mightiest genius can never go. But the measure of freedom of each age must be constantly enlarged" (Kandinsky 1977, p. 17). And second, it is rooted in its historical moment: "Every artist, as child of his age, is impelled to express the spirit of his age (this is the element of style) – dictated by the period and particular country to which the artist belongs (it is doubtful how long the latter distinction will continue to exist)" (p. 33).

Hegel, of course, does not go in this direction; for him, art after the end of art, art in a reconciled world, has to be comical. What if, however, comedy and radical nonreconciliation do not exclude each other (the reason the best films about the Holocaust are comedies)? Recall how Primo Levi, in *If This Is a Man*, describes the dreadful *selekcja*, the survival examination in the camp:

The *Blockältester* [the elder of the hut] has closed the connecting-door and has opened the other two which lead from the dormitory and the *Tagesraum* [daily room] outside. Here, in front of the two doors, stands the arbiter of our fate, an SS subaltern. On his right is the *Blockältester*, on his left, the quartermaster of the hut. Each one of us, as he comes naked out of the *Tagesraum* into the cold October air, has to run the few steps between the two doors, give the card to the SS man and enter the dormitory door. The SS man, in the fraction of a second between two successive crossings, with a glance at one's back and front, judges everyone's fate, and in turn gives the card to the man on his right or his left, and this is the life or death of each of us. In three or four minutes a hut of two hundred men is "done," as is the whole camp of twelve thousand men in the course of the afternoon. (Levi 1987, pp. 133–4)

Right means survival; left means gas chamber. Is there not something properly *comic* in this, the ridiculous spectacle of appearing strong and healthy, of attracting for a brief moment the indifferent gaze of the Nazi administrator who presides over life and death? Here, comedy and horror coincide: Imagine the prisoners practicing their appearance, trying to

hold head high and chest forward, walking with a brisk step, pinching their lips to appear less pale, exchanging advice on how to impress the SS man; imagine how a simple momentary confusion of cards or a lack of attention of the SS man can decide my fate.

This “comical” aspect, of course, causes no laughter – it rather stands for a position beyond comedy and tragedy. On one hand, the Muslim⁴ is so destitute that his stance can no longer be considered “tragic”: There is no dignity in him that is crucial for the tragic position; that is, he no longer retains the minimum of dignity against the background of which his miserable actual position would have appeared as tragic. He is simply reduced to the shell of a person, emptied of the spark of spirit. If we try to present him as tragic, the effect will be precisely comic, as when one tries to read tragic dignity into meaningless, idiotic persistence. On the other hand, although the Muslim is in a way comic, although he acts in the way that is usually the stuff of comedy and laughter (his automatic, mindless, repetitive gestures, his impassive pursuit of food), the utter misery of his condition thwarts any attempt to present and/or perceive him as a comic character. If we try to present him as comic, the effect will be precisely tragic, as when the sad sight of someone cruelly mocking a helpless victim (say, putting obstacles in the way of a blind person to see if he will stumble), instead of producing laughter in us, generates sympathy for the victim’s tragic predicament. Did not something along these lines happen with the rituals of humiliation in the camps, from the inscription *Arbeit macht frei* above the entrance to the gate at Auschwitz to the music band that accompanied prisoners to work or to the gas chambers? The paradox is that it is only through such cruel humor that the tragic sentiment can be generated. The Muslim is thus the zero-point at which the very opposition between tragedy and comedy, between sublime and ridiculous, between dignity and derision is suspended, the point at which one pole directly passes into its opposite. If we try to present the Muslim’s predicament as tragic, the result is comic, a mocking parody of tragic dignity, and if we treat him as a comic character, tragedy emerges.

So maybe Hegel, in his tragic vision, was not able to consider the possibility of a horror worse than tragedy, one that, precisely for this reason, may give rise to comedy, a laughter that is not done from the position of reconciliation, laughing at the vanity of the conflicts that persist, but a laughter through which the subject’s total capitulation and disorientation transpire. In other words, Hegel knew that comedy follows

⁴ [As recorded by Levi, *Muselmänner* was inmates’ term for those in the camps who had given themselves over to despair, the “living dead” who were considered prime candidates for the selection described here.—Ed.]

tragedy; what he was not able to imagine is a comedy more horrible than tragedy. So it is not that Hegel jumped too quickly to comedy, to comic reconciliation, and that he should see that the tragedy of alienation and antagonism goes on in the modern world. In the modern world, tragedy passed over to comedy, there is no return to tragic experience, and we should learn to see the horror in terms of comedy, in comedy itself. For Hegel, however, the comedy that fits the modern era concerns what he calls *Humanus*, art without historical Truth, just depicting ordinary life with its irrelevant conflicts and in this way signaling that the Absolute is reconciled with itself. Modern art transcends itself, but

in this self-transcendence art is nevertheless a withdrawal of man into himself, a descent into his own breast, whereby art strips away from itself all fixed restriction to a specific range of content and treatment, and makes *Humanus* its new holy of holies: i.e. the depths and heights of the human heart as such, mankind in its joys and sorrows, its strivings, deeds, and fates. Herewith the artist acquires his subject-matter in himself and is the human spirit actually self-determining and considering, meditating, and expressing the infinity of its feelings and situations: nothing that can be living in the human breast is alien to that spirit any more. This is a subject-matter which does not remain determined artistically in itself and on its own account; on the contrary, the specific character of the topic and its outward formation is left to capricious invention, yet no interest is excluded – for art does not need any longer to represent only what is absolutely at home at one of its specific stages, but everything in which man as such is capable of being at home. (VPA II, 237–8/I, 607)

In this universe where there are no privileged “great topics” and “anything goes,” all conflict has to remain in the domain of comedy:

Absolute subjective personality moves free in itself and in the spiritual world. Satisfied in itself, it no longer unites itself with anything objective and particularized and it brings the negative side of this dissolution into consciousness in the humor of comedy. Yet on this peak comedy leads at the same time to the dissolution of art altogether. All art aims at the identity, produced by the spirit, in which eternal things, God, and absolute truth are revealed in real appearance and shape to our contemplation, to our hearts and minds. But if comedy presents this unity only as its self-destruction because the Absolute, which wants to realize itself, sees its self-actualization destroyed by interests that have now become explicitly free in the real world and are directed only on what is accidental and subjective, then the presence and agency of the Absolute no longer appears positively unified. (VPA III, 572–3/II, 1236)

It is interesting to note that the expression *l'art pour l'art*, which registers art's full autonomy as an end in itself, not serving any broader social purpose, was coined by Hegel's French pupil Victor Cousin and is the strict obverse of Hegel's thesis on the end of art. It is as if art loses its privileged status of the expression of Absolute at the very moment when it

asserts its full autonomy. When it finally arrives at what it was striving for – the full emancipation from the sacred, from social utility, and so on – the prize becomes worthless; the emancipation of art turns into the emancipation from art. This is one of the ways to understand why Hegel himself characterized art after the end of art as its self-destruction – and is this not what modern art effectively is, caught as it is in a permanent process of self-questioning that goes up to self-annihilation? But we can also understand it in a different way, as the regression of art into superficial comedy. That is to say, does Hegel's description not fit perfectly the universe of today's sitcoms, from *Seinfeld* to Mexican telenovelas? The (social) world is basically reconciled; there are no antagonisms cutting across it, just ordinary people with their everyday, mostly ridiculous complications. The very form of sitcoms seems to evoke the Hegelian "spurious infinity": There are no big issues, just melodramatic complications that pop up and disappear. So it seems as if Hegel was here ahead of his time; it is only today that reality has generated a product that fits his description.

13 The Freudian Sabbath

Jonathan Lear

1 It is Hegel's great merit to bring philosophy back to life. Perhaps no philosopher since Aristotle so insisted that philosophy arise out of forms of life and find validation in them. Hegel, of course, insisted that human life was historical and needed to be comprehended as such. There is a question then of what it would be to receive Freud's contribution in a Hegelian spirit. One way would be assign Freudian psychoanalysis a social meaning: locate it in the context of Enlightenment Europe, part of a concern for individual fulfillment, as well as a protest against the forms of confinement that bourgeois culture imposed. I want to take a different tack. I want to suggest that, in a Hegelian spirit, we come to appreciate the Freudian contribution by recognizing how it comes *after* Hegel and thus demands revisions to Hegel's own understanding of self-consciousness and its requirements.

2 For Hegel, human self-consciousness is essentially apperceptive. And it is apperception that binds self-consciousness to the public domain. We are aware of ourselves in our actions, judgments, and perceptions. Thus our self-consciousness inevitably involves us in making claims: that we are sustaining a commitment in our actions, that our beliefs are true,

I am indebted to Robert Pippin for a generation of the most solid, loyal, true collegueship any professor could hope for. As the long-serving chair of the Committee on Social Thought he made that institution a realm of academic freedom and inquiry. His insightful questions in seminars and colloquia continue to reverberate through my mind years after they were asked. His free-ranging intellectual inquiries – through Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, to film noir and the western, the place of beauty in modernity, the meaning of Henry James's fiction – show us a thoughtful mind bound only by its own questions and their answers. His writing is a paradigm of intellectual integrity. During my tenure on an Andrew Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Award, I was able to conduct two seminar courses on Psychoanalysis and Self-Consciousness; one with Matthew Boyle, the other with Sebastian Rödl. Our extended conversations have helped me formulate the thoughts expressed in this essay. My wife Gabriel Lear has been my constant conversational partner since the millennium and there is no aspect of my thinking that has not been influenced by her. Finally, I would like to mention my first teacher of Hegel: Charles Parkin, Fellow of Clare College Cambridge, one of those modest men who did not receive the social recognition he deserved, but who thought very deeply and made a lifetime difference to the students he taught.

our perceptions accurate, our desires well directed. As Robert Pippin puts it in his path-breaking interpretation, there is a *to-be-achieved* internal to our form of self-consciousness (Pippin 2011).¹ This grounds Hegel's claim that self-consciousness is desire. But if we can conceptualize self-consciousness as desire, we can inquire into the conditions of its satisfaction. Since in apperceptive self-consciousness I am inherently making claims about how it is with me and the world, satisfaction would seem to consist in getting it right and knowing myself to be getting it right about how things are. But to know that I am getting it right, I need to have the capacity to distinguish the appearance from the reality of getting it right. There is no way, Hegel thinks, an individual can do this on his own. We seem to be driven to public forms of recognition to legitimize our self-conscious assessments and commitments. In part, this is because there does not seem to be any other place to look. Hegel rejected the idea of a 'metaphysical self': the idea that there is a soul-substance of any kind, an independent me-thing that can be observed, consulted, or reported upon (Pippin 2011, pp. 15–16). The self is the outcome and manifestation of myriad struggles for recognition. And thus, for Hegel, the only possible arena in which my claims to self-definition could be validated must be public. Thus Hegel's famous claim that self-consciousness can find satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.²

3 No sooner has the claim been made than one begins to lose a grasp of what it means. For it seems to fail Hegel's own criterion of philosophical adequacy. Pippin states the criterion this way:

Hegel treats the project of human self-knowledge as essentially a matter of what he calls Geist's "actuality," its historical and social development, and he seems to effect a shift in the proper subject matter of philosophy itself, insisting that philosophy must not study mere concepts but concepts in their actuality; and that means in the *Phenomenology* in their historical actuality, when that actuality is considered in terms of this experiential "test." (Pippin 2011, p. 2)

One way to view philosophy's beginnings is with Socrates's insight that self-consciousness ought not be satisfied with public recognition. People understood themselves to be doctors and politicians, citizens, pious, wise,

¹ Pippin's work on Hegel has not only influenced a generation on how to read Hegel, it has influenced a generation to read Hegel. In the face of an anti-idealist trend in twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy, he has convinced a wide swathe of the contemporary philosophical generation that we can no longer go on ignoring Hegel in this way. I shall throughout this essay be relying on his interpretation of Hegel. My aim is to pursue this Hegelian line of thought, not to insist this is what Hegel actually did think.

² PhG §175. "Das Selbstbewußtsein erreicht seine Befriedigung nur in einem andern Selbstbewußtsein."

and brave men – and they received public validation – and Socrates showed that they had almost no clue what they were talking about. In a modern context, it has become visible that public norms are imbued with chatter, cliché, fashion, and happenstance, with distortions due to social injustice, prejudice, and the stubborn ignorance of the crowd. So how could my status – as poet, professor, physician, or even politician – depend on public recognition without thereby falling into enslavement of the crowd?

Hegel's strategy was to welcome the problem and move the solution to the future. The problem is that we have not yet achieved the right kind of recognition. And it is precisely these misfires of recognition that will provide the tensions to move toward a better resolution. We cannot know in advance of working through these failures what the right kind of recognition will consist in. As Pippin says,

The recognition-relation must satisfy certain conditions if the recognition is going to do what the claimant to recognition requires . . . It must be mutual: it must satisfy the conditions of genuine mutuality . . . Hegel veers away from Kant on what counts as true mutuality: methodologically conceding that we do not have any determinate idea *ex ante* of what genuine mutuality consists in . . . Hegel concedes we have a formal account of mutuality but without an experiential, developmental account that includes the struggle we will never be able to resolve what such genuine mutuality amounts to. (Pippin 2011, pp. 90–3)

This solution earned the satire of Kierkegaard, a modern-day follower of Socrates. His pseudonymous author Johannes Climacus never tired of insisting that the system will be completed by the end of next week, but certainly no later than the following Tuesday (Kierkegaard 2009). Humor aside, this is the challenge to Hegel: In the name of getting rid of wish-fulfilling fantasies in the claims I make for myself – demanding public recognition as validation – does he not let wish-fulfillment in the back door by locating the right kind of recognition in an idealized future?

4 One way to view Freud's achievement is as providing a different kind of solution to the problem of the satisfaction of self-consciousness. He was as committed as Hegel to the thought that self-consciousness ought to be capable of self-understanding, free of wish-fulfilling fantasies. And thus it ought to have the capacity to determine the difference between the appearance and reality of self-understanding. Perhaps he was truer to Hegel's principle that our concept of *self-consciousness* and its satisfaction ought to stand the experiential test of actuality. The satisfaction of self-consciousness – whatever we might mean by that phrase – ought to be realizable in actual conditions. This should be so, even if there are flaws in the available structures of public recognition. It is not, for Freud, that recognition is of no importance, but whatever importance it does carry

will be oblique. And, perhaps more importantly, it will depend on movements of self-consciousness with which Hegel was not in a position to reckon. As we have seen, Hegel was drawn to public recognition as the region of validation because he thought there was no other place to go. Thus his insistence that it is *only* in another self-consciousness that self-consciousness can find satisfaction. But Freud found another place to go.

To put it in Hegelian idiom, Freudian psychoanalysis introduces a new understanding of what it might mean for self-consciousness to be adequate to itself. He does this by introducing a new mode of apperception. This has as a byproduct that there is now more than one way to test the ordinary claims of self-consciousness: not only by whether they receive public validation but also by how well or badly they fit with the unusual claims of another mode of apperceptive self-consciousness. In effect, Freud discovered unexpected ways of developing the self via developing new possibilities for the development of self-consciousness. The Freudian intervention is thus more than a remarkable discovery about the human psyche: It is a development in the concept *self-consciousness*. It allows for critical inspection of the self and of one's inner world in a manner that is not philosophically suspect. Indeed, it provides a new sense for what we might mean by such critical inspection. But in developing our concept of self-consciousness, Freudian psychoanalysis also opens new possibilities for what the satisfaction of self-consciousness could consist in. One can follow Hegel and accept that self-consciousness cannot involve observation of a soul-substance, that there is in that sense nothing to be observed; accept that the self is in an important sense an achievement; and at the same time insist that its satisfaction cannot be achieved solely in the public realm.

This is not an obvious reading of Freud, but this lack of obviousness is due, I think, to historical contingencies. First, Freud harbored an ambition to be an empirical scientist of a positivist sort. He also wanted to portray psychoanalysis along the lines of the doctor-patient relationship, as it was understood and enforced in late nineteenth-century bourgeois Vienna. So, as a result of historical contingencies, Freud was seeking the wrong kind of recognition – and he unwittingly distorted the description of what he was doing in the hope of obtaining it. Second, the reception of psychoanalysis, both in popular culture and in the academic world, has tended to focus on Freud's theories rather than his method. Debate has raged over his claims about infantile sexuality, the Oedipus complex, the death-drive, and so on. Much less attention has been paid to the form of the activity from which these claims emerged. But if we think of psychoanalysis in terms of its proper activity, the purported results ought to be secondary. Whichever of Freud's theories are worth retaining ought to be

confirmed again and again in clinical experience. Whatever is not so confirmed may be of historical interest but is no more than that. Third, insofar as popular and academic cultures have paid attention to method, they have focused on a form Freud abandoned. Freud tried out many techniques: hypnotism, catharsis, laying on of hands, and perhaps most famously a form of suggestion known as deep interpretation. In a deep interpretation, the analyst functions as an authority, a master of sorts, telling an analysand what is going on deep in the analysand's unconscious. Even serious academic discussion has tended to view the analyst as a sleuth, having the ability to draw unusual inferences from shards of empirically available evidence. But Freud quickly noticed that simply stating truths about a person to that person provokes almost any reaction – protest, intensification of symptoms, breaking off treatment – *except* a cure (Freud 1905, pp. 112–22). He abandoned the method of deep interpretation.³ Though his new method has been a source of intense interest and debate within the psychoanalytic profession, it has largely been ignored in the academic world.⁴

In effect, Freud gave up the role of master for the role of midwife – and put the development of the analysand's capacity for self-conscious awareness at the center of psychoanalysis. Freud described the culmination of his technique this way:

Finally, there was evolved the consistent technique used today, in which the analyst gives up the attempt to bring a particular moment or problem into focus. He contents himself with studying whatever is present for the time being on the surface of the patient's mind, and he employs the art of interpretation mainly for the purpose of recognizing the resistances which appear there, and making them conscious to the patient. From this there results a new sort of division of labor: the doctor uncovers the resistances which are unknown to the patient; when these have been got the better of, the patient often relates the forgotten situations and connections without any difficulty. (Freud 1914, pp. 147–8)

By *the surface* of the patient's mind, Freud means whatever is coming to conscious awareness. As Freud came to realize, that is precisely what the analysand should be enjoined to speak out loud. He called it the *fundamental rule* of psychoanalysis: to say whatever comes to mind without

³ See, for example, the footnote Freud added in 1914 to a later edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900): "The technique [of dream-interpretation] which I describe in the pages that follow differs in one essential respect from the ancient method: *It imposes the task of interpretation upon the dreamer himself. It is not concerned with what occurs to the interpreter in connection with a particular element of the dream but with what occurs to the dreamer*" (Freud 1900, p. 98n, my emphasis).

⁴ There is, of course, a further question about how well Freud lived up to his teachings, but that is beyond the scope of this essay.

inhibition or censorship.⁵ One can see simply by looking at the structure of the activity that psychoanalysis is essentially and exhaustively a development of apperceptive consciousness. But it takes an unusual form.

5 The psychoanalytic situation is basically a Sabbath from the normal tasks of apperceptive self-consciousness. And yet it is itself a mode of apperception. During fifty minutes in the day, one relaxes from the tasks of making claims, figuring out what one believes, sustaining one's everyday commitments in the social world, responding to everyday challenges about what one is up to. One takes a rest from giving reasons: a break from the ordinary tasks of logos. The only requirement is to allow one's mind to wander and to say out loud whatever comes to mind. It is like the Sabbath requirement to honor the Sabbath: one does not just take a rest; one takes a rest as a way of following a rule. One all along maintains an apperceptive attentiveness to what is going on. Following the fundamental rule, then, is one determination of what we might mean by *letting self-consciousness unfold freely*. It happens precisely when one relaxes from the normal tasks that apperceptive self-consciousness accompanies.

Normal apperceptive self-consciousness is – by and large, tacitly as well as explicitly – a realm of claims and commitments, a realm in which one is more or less ready, if challenged, to take responsibility. One can see how, perhaps as an unintended byproduct, it sets up a boundary. On the far side are unclaimed aspects of mental activity: that for which one does not want to make a claim or sustain a commitment. One would rather not attach an “I think.” And yet, as Freud discovered, not only was it possible for the “I think” to accompany these representations too, if one kept it up self-consciousness would develop in rather astonishing directions.

Since the normal claims of apperception are suspended, so also are the normal issues about whether one is getting it right. But by enjoining the fundamental rule a new issue of getting it right is established: Is one following the fundamental rule, or not? Again, it must be possible to establish a difference here between appearance and reality for the idea of following this rule to have legitimacy. In this case, there is an anchor in the public realm, but there is more to it than that. The fundamental rule is most clearly observed in its breakdowns. Freud called them *resistances* because he saw there was a motivated, though largely unconscious, aspect to the breakdown. On many occasions, there actually is a phenomenology to the resistance. If one attends to one's experience, one can often *feel* oneself stuck in silence; one can *feel* a thought escaping consciousness;

⁵ This is the central and constitutive rule of psychoanalysis. All other rules – frequency of visits, whether to lie on a couch, and so on – gain whatever legitimacy they have from how well they facilitate a process in which analysands are free to follow the fundamental rule.

one can *feel* anxiety disturbing the train of one's thought; one can *feel* an intrusive thought breaking into consciousness. We mostly do not notice these feels for we do not attend to them. One of the roles of the analyst is as a teacher who helps the analysand develop a capacity to recognize resistances, as they occur in the "here and now," as items of immediate and direct experience. The point is not to take the analyst's word for it. Nor is it to draw an inference, based on empirical evidence, that "I must be resisting." Rather, one develops the capacity to experience resistance as an aspect of self-conscious life. In other words, the aim is to develop a capacity of apperception. Though there are exceptions, for a wide range of cases the analysand develops a first-person authority for her resistances. She can come to recognize them immediately in her experience.

Freud discovered that no one can follow the fundamental rule. As he says, "*There comes a time in every analysis when the patient disregards it*" (Freud 1913, pp. 134–5; my emphasis). In my clinical experience, that time comes pretty much immediately, and resistances continue throughout the analysis. The phenomenon of resistance suggests that there is something internal to the unfolding of self-consciousness that opposes it. This means that if the fundamental rule is a route to the Freudian unconscious, that route will essentially be a struggle for recognition – though of an inverse sort from the one Hegel imagined. That which we are struggling to recognize is not itself struggling to be recognized. And our own struggle to recognize it is itself permeated by ambivalence and avoidance.

6 There is a further analogy to normal apperceptive experience. As the psychoanalytic process unfolds, one discovers psychic activities that are uncannily similar to making claims and sustaining commitments. In effect, there seems to be an uncanny *to-be-achieved* of the unconscious as well. The unconscious is often experienced as though it were a fate – for example, that I am fated never to meet the right person. There is a weird *to-be-achieved* here: what it is for the fate to come true. There is also a weird intimacy. The strange thing about fate is that it does not fit neatly on either side of the me/not-me divide. On the one hand, insofar as I experience it at all, it seems to be imposed on me – coming somehow from "the outside"; on the other hand, my fate determines who I am. And no one else can have my fate but me.

Freud saw these structures and he conceptualized them as repetitions. There is an ambiguity in this conceptualization. Is a repetition another act that is just like one in the past, or is it the very same act somehow again alive in the present? Actually, both sides of this ambiguity are present, the former more an aspect of conscious experience, the latter coloring the less

conscious aspects. Freud said that the unconscious was “timeless” – and part of what that means is that, in the repetitions, a form of life is sustained. There is a to-be-achieved here – a fantasy-filled summing up of the meaning of life – one that attempts to absorb past, present, and future by suspending the efforts to distinguish between them.⁶ Life is lived under a more or less unconscious imperative – for example, that intimacy is to elude me. It is as though there is an unconscious “proto-self” in place, exerting a profound influence on how a person lives. As the analytic process unfolds, one can become immediately, self-consciously aware of processes that had hitherto escaped notice.

In a way, Freud saw this himself. He developed the concept *ego* in significant part because he saw that there are strategies of the self that evade normal apperceptive recognition. It was puzzling to him to discover that the unconscious is working on both sides of the repressing/repressed divide:

The repressed is the prototype of the unconscious for us . . . we find ourselves in an unforeseen situation. We have come upon *something in the ego itself which is also unconscious*, which behaves exactly like the repressed – that is, which produces powerful effects without itself being conscious and which requires special work before it can be made conscious . . . *we must admit that the characteristic of being unconscious begins to lose significance for us*. It becomes a quality which can have many meanings, a quality which we are unable to make, as we should have hoped to do, the basis of far-reaching and inevitable consequences. (Freud 1923, pp. 15–18)

Freud’s pessimism in the last sentence is, I think, a basis for optimism. In effect, he admits that his hope for a positivist science based on the discovery of repressed contents is not adequate to uncover the unconscious dimensions of the self. Instead, the analytic process needs to focus on helping the analysand develop an apperceptive capacity to accompany these self-like activities. The process of doing this is a struggle – a struggle against resistances – but the struggle itself can be self-conscious and that is a constituent part of building up this unusual apperceptive capacity.

7 For Hegel, our human form of self-consciousness is capable of satisfaction because there is internal to it a to-be-achieved. Our normal apperceptive consciousness consists, implicitly and explicitly, in making claims and sustaining commitments. Satisfaction consists in obtaining validation that these claims and commitments are as they purport to be. As I have suggested, psychoanalysis comes into existence by creating a

⁶ This “timelessness” of the unconscious is crucial to understanding how psychoanalysis can work as a therapeutic method: These “timeless” structures inevitably work their way into the psychoanalytic situation in a form Freud named *transference*. I discuss transference in Lear 2015, ch. 4.

Sabbath moment from this normal form of apperceptive self-consciousness. It is a mode of apperception formed by the injunction to take a rest from the normal to-be-achieveds of self-consciousness. It is thus an extraordinary mode of self-consciousness whose satisfaction consists in momentarily suspending the ordinary satisfactions of self-consciousness, as Hegel understood them.

This looks like a small change, but the results are extraordinary. In effect, this new mode of apperceptive self-consciousness introduces us to two new realms of the to-be-achieved. First, what emerges from this process is an increasingly self-conscious awareness of a primordial structure that has its own uncanny to-be-achieved: It works to organize the self so as to live in a certain way, under a peculiar aura of experience. The analysand resists recognizing his own activity in organizing this experience – to put it in Freud's terms, the analysand resists recognizing his own unconscious ego – but through the painstaking work of this unusual form of apperception one can become immediately and directly aware of its workings. Perhaps Freud's greatest discovery is that the unconscious is not so much a realm of hidden contents but an unusual mode of mental activity, very different from what we are used to in normal apperceptive self-consciousness. For all that, it nevertheless has its own aims, and we can give content to the idea that it seeks its own satisfactions. But now, the psychoanalytic method is, in effect, a mode of allowing what had hitherto been unconscious to show up in this unusual form of apperception. And that creates its own challenge.

For, second, it is now as though self-consciousness is going off in two orthogonal directions. Normal self-consciousness is busy making its claims, attempting to sustain its commitments, seeking public validations, correcting for its mistakes, and so on. Then, this emerging Sabbath self-consciousness seems to be bringing to light a weirdly subversive meaning to my everyday understandings. This raises the question of what we can any longer mean by *self*-consciousness. If we confine ourselves to the normal forms of apperception, there is now a question of whether that delivers genuine self-consciousness or a simulacrum. For if there is also an abnormal form of apperception that reveals a primordial "proto-self" hitherto split off from consciousness but making its own "claims" about how life shall be lived and the world be experienced and if it regularly "achieves" its end of organizing the self that way, then it would seem that normal apperception only gives us the "self" of "self-consciousness" in an attenuated way. To maintain that normal apperception gives us what is distinctive about human self-consciousness is – however unwittingly – to participate in splitting off this unrecognized but crucially important part of the self. It would seem then that the Freudian introduction of a Sabbath mode of

apperception introduces a new to-be-achieved for self-consciousness. For the unity of apperceptive self-consciousness would seem to require that we integrate its normal and its Sabbath modes – and it is not clear that we yet know how to do this.

But this challenge presents a remarkable opportunity. For by taking up the Sabbath perspective of self-consciousness, we can, as it were, bracket the workings of normal apperceptive self-consciousness and its purported satisfactions in public recognition – and ask how well the whole package is doing. We need not postpone this task to the future.

8 What follows is an all-too-brief experiential test in actuality of the idea that the Sabbath perspective gives another means for evaluating the satisfactions of self-consciousness. In a Hegelian spirit, I want to prove – that is, offer a demonstration that ought to be convincing to a Hegelian – that a contemporary Hegelian ought also to be a Freudian. Not a Freudian as that term is commonly understood, but someone willing to develop Freud's inheritance as it ought to be received.

Since readers of this essay will most likely be academics, let us consider the concept *professor*. This would seem to be a paradigm case of Hegel's principle that self-consciousness can only find satisfaction in another self-consciousness. For to *be* a professor is simply to *be recognized* as a professor by one or another of the institutions that are themselves *socially recognized* as able to confer the status. My understanding of myself as a professor, the claims I make, the commitments I sustain, the ways I behave are all ultimately validated in the public realm. So the concept *professor* would seem a best-case example of Hegel's thesis that my self-understanding as a professor is ultimately validated in the public realm.

For the purpose of this argument, we are eliminating the complexities that arise for a related concept such as *teacher* (see Lear 2011, ch. 1). With such a concept, we can meditate on the basic needs of human life – and come to the conclusion that we are the kind of creatures who, to get on in life, need to be taught. And as we look across history and survey different cultures, we see that there have been many different modes of teaching. We can also recognize within our own traditions world historical figures – Socrates, Jesus – who in their exemplarity called familiar forms of teaching into question. There is thus room for questioning how adequate the contemporary forms of public recognition are for *satisfying* my claims and commitments to be a teacher. And room for a philosophically significant form of irony opens up as I recognize that the ideals and goals with which I might try to define teaching – “learning what we need to know” – are imbued with the same vagueness. Our problem is not simply one of living up to a well-understood ideal. There is thus room for an earnest

yet ironic question whether any of us (publicly recognized) teachers are teachers.

I mention this problem to set it aside. It does not seem to make sense to ask in the same sort of way whether professors are professors. The concept *professor* is so thoroughly rooted in institutions of social recognition that there does not appear to be room for irony. It would seem that here, if anywhere, the satisfaction of self-consciousness – my self-understanding as a professor – could only be validated in another self-consciousness – public recognition of myself as such.

Furthermore, this is a case in which the Geist-like structures of recognition are robust. If we consider the top-ranked research universities – for whatever flaws they may also have – they are civilizational high points when it comes to academic research. Serious efforts have gone into instituting transparent procedures of evaluation, of correcting for typical human foibles of favoritism and prejudice, and thus for establishing a meritocracy of research. So, if one were to be interested in understanding oneself as a *professor*, it would be difficult to imagine a more convincing social institution of recognition than the modern research university.

Yet, even here it seems there is room for disquiet. It is a recognizable phenomenon that when a person finally gets promoted to full professor, he or she feels let down. It does not feel like the event it is supposed to be. On occasion it provokes a mid-life crisis. It is precisely the moment of satisfaction of self-consciousness in terms of public recognition that makes for a sense of dissatisfaction in terms of personal fulfillment. Are we only to understand this in terms of the idiosyncrasies of personal psychology? In a Freudian-Hegelian spirit, I want to answer in the negative.

I have found in my analytic work that these feelings of anxious discontent have been a conscious surface of deeper unconscious structures of disappointment. I want to use the term *disappointment* widely. I first came to see the structure with an analysand who was adept at experiencing disappointment no matter what happened to her (I discuss this case in Lear 2016, ch. 1). She would explain away her evident social successes as having an underlying disappointing dimension. (Promoted at work, for example, she surmised that her boss did not want to give her the promotion but felt forced to do so.) But I have since seen similar structures organized around mild depression as well as around distancing forms of wit, sarcasm, or irony (as that term is commonly understood). I have also worked with people who do not feel quite real in their social role, though they know they are recognized as doing well. One described a feeling of “living behind plate glass”: He felt confined behind a barrier no one else could see. Another spoke of feeling distant, “looking through a telescope

backward” at the recognition he received. For them, the recognition is part of the problem.

The important point here is not about feelings of dissatisfaction, but what those feelings signify. The occasion of public recognition is part of a larger dynamic structure that thwarts the development of the self. So, to stick with the example, the promotion to full professor does validate a certain self-understanding, but the process as a whole thwarts the development of self-consciousness. We need to see how this process works.

It is disappointing to live in a disappointing world. So why would anyone choose to live this way? No one I have met does. But people hit upon strategies of living that because they provide certain satisfactions get selected without a person understanding that this is happening. What is to be said for disappointment? First, it renders the world, and one’s place in it, intelligible. It thus protects against the anxiety threatened by not knowing one’s way about. Second, it protects against real-life disappointment by, as it were, getting there first. It looks as though one is vulnerable, but in fantasy one renders oneself invulnerable by anticipating disappointment and inflicting it on oneself. Third, the activity of disappointing oneself serves to wall off and protect a secret corner of the self that is full of grandiosity. Rather than being integrated into the psyche, and thus providing a healthy sense of self-regard and creative energy, a split-off part holds onto infantile fantasies of omnipotence. This comes out in dreams, but also in subterranean contempt for the public recognition received. The disappointed psyche is simultaneously needy and contemptuous of public reassurance. This is enough to establish what Freud conceptualized as a structure of repetition: an endless search for a fantasied gratification through real-world achievement (public recognition) that, in attaining it, carries with it the disappointing sense that it cannot provide the gratification that had been sought. Thereby the structure of a split psyche is held in place.

Freud said that the unconscious was timeless and that it did not feel pressure to respond to contradiction (Freud 1915, p. 187). We can see this at work in the case of a person living a disappointing life. On the surface, the person maintains normal apperceptive consciousness of the passing events in the historical time of her life. The disappointment today is different from the disappointment of last year. Indeed, before the analysis she may not even have noticed a *string* of disappointments. But as the Sabbath mode of apperception unfolds, analyst and analysand come to see a timeless structure that has the form of an injunction: *that life shall be disappointing*. In some weird but uncannily familiar way, nothing seems to interfere. Any public success that seems to contradict this fate turns out to be only more evidence in its favor. Part of the work

of analysis is to help the analysand develop a self-conscious capacity to track in the here and now how this timeless dimension of experience, relatively indifferent to contradiction, can be there to be experienced in the midst of the passing events of normal apperceptive consciousness.

9 Once one attends to this Sabbath mode of apperception, one can see that the established modes of recognition can be used to defeat the very recognition they are designed to confer. This is true even when the social form of recognition is as robust as a top-ranked research university and the category at stake is *professor*. The reason is straightforward. If we abjure from idealized forms of recognition – and postponing the right form of recognition to some time in the future is a means of idealization – and focus on even the best available forms of public recognition, we will always be able to find ways we come up lacking. That is part of what it is to live in the actual world. But the disappointed psyche will have a sharp eye for those inevitable fault lines and an uncanny ability to put them to use.

So, to continue with our example, the contemporary university is under pressure to provide objective measures of its research outcomes. In terms of promotion to professor, this means number of publications in peer-reviewed journals, numbers of citations by other authors, invitations to speak at other universities and at conferences, and so on. Insistence on such formal criteria has had notable salutary effects – for example, breaking down old boys' networks, as well as gender, ethnic, and racial discriminations. But every institutional structure carries with it its own forms of leveling down. So, in this case, how is it possible to adjudicate between a truly outstanding paper that has yet to make a difference to an academic field that is itself fatigued and fifteen average-quality articles that are cited in other publications? It is understood that more is published than is read, that journals come into existence to provide vehicles for academic promotion and financial profit for publishers, that citations occur to prove the author has "surveyed the literature" rather than is really thinking through the work of another author. The university is put in the awkward position of paying faculty to write books and articles that are then published by specialist journals and university presses and sold back to the university libraries at exorbitant prices. The university needs this to bestow public recognition.

People notice flaws in the system of recognition and adapt themselves to them. Even entering graduate students start to shape themselves into an *appearance* of an academic: into what they think will be recognized by the recognizing agency. They do things to put them on their résumé. Some of what they do they know to be dubious – taking an uninspired

course on “pedagogy” or, worse, choosing an “area of specialization” because they think it will look good.

The disappointed psyche, as we saw, is stuck in an endless repetition of seeking recognitions that, at each stage, fail to provide what is being sought. On the side of the modern university, there is no upper bound on possible objective achievements. This places paradoxical pressure on the institution conferring recognition. There is the well-known pressure that faculty feel to avoid teaching as much as possible, so as to make time for research, and certainly to stay away from teaching outside areas that promote research. Then there is the pressure to be *elsewhere*: to be, say, an invited speaker at some other university or conference. A former dean of a well-known medical school said his school could survive a direct nuclear attack because at any given moment 40 percent of his faculty was in the air. It is an irony worthy of Kierkegaard that a department gets to be ranked first only when it can prove nobody is there.

10 There is, then, room for irony even with as socially grounded a concept as *professor*. The newly tenured star can ask himself: “Am I really a professor, or just a convincing fraud?” And we can wonder how *full* of professorship are our “full” professors, really? There is, furthermore, room to speculate whether the emptiness I hear of in my analytic office is not just a report of individual psychopathology, but whether it is also a symptom of a social formation, of a Geist-like problem: a difficulty in the life of the concept in its actuality.

Now a traditional (non-Freudian) Hegelian can easily take this problem in stride. Such tensions are the stuff of historical change; they provide the material for a struggle toward a more adequate form of recognition. But from a Freudian perspective, this ease of stride is part of the problem. For once we can take this Sabbath mode of apperception – which is psychoanalysis – into account, we can see that all these tensions, dysfunctions, and misrecognitions are a source of stability, not change. For the recognition system that is the modern research university – with all its excellences and its phoniness – provides an environment, an ecological niche, for the disappointed psyche to survive. It can latch onto the system of recognitions and get caught up in its cycle of ever increasing demands, at the same time stepping back and saying *sotto voce*, “This isn’t really real.”

Only from the Sabbath perspective can one see that this is relevant to the satisfaction of self-consciousness. For it is not until one can bracket the realm of normal apperception – of making claims, sustaining commitments, and seeking validation – that one can see that this whole system can function dynamically to keep the self split in fragments. Insofar as the

normal realm of apperception pretends that it is all there is to apperceptive self-consciousness, it cuts off the Sabbath mode and relegates it to a netherworld Freud called the unconscious. "It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany each of my representations" (Kant B131): true, but if one insists that the normal forms of apperception are all there are, then one in effect forbids certain representations from ever getting into a position of consciousness from which it would be possible to attach the "I think." And so, in the very act of seeking "the satisfaction of self-consciousness" normally understood – for example, the public validation of my self-understanding as professor – I divide self-consciousness from itself. It is an act of *dissatisfaction* because the ultimate to-be-achieved of self-consciousness – its own integration – is effectively denied.⁷

In this context, the chatter about Freud and psychoanalysis – "Freud's theories are outdated," "psychoanalysis takes too long," "behavioral modification is more effective" – takes on a new meaning. For it assumes there is nothing more to the self than what is revealed in the normal modes of apperception. This is a good reason why a contemporary Hegelian ought also to be a Freudian. For unless one gives due respect to this Sabbath mode of self-consciousness, one ends up being a supporter of a Geist-like movement that aims to satisfy us with fragments of our possibilities. Once one sees that psychoanalysis is nothing other than a development of a mode of apperception, the claim that "psychoanalysis takes too long" turns out to be the claim that self-consciousness takes too long.

11 It is reason's task, Socrates tells us in the *Republic*, to look after the whole soul (441e). Hegel helps us understand that we do not yet know what this claim means. Socrates in effect set down a task. We will come to understand what reason is, we will come to understand what rationality consists in, as we come to understand what it is adequately to look after the whole soul. Insofar as we succeed at this task, it will be a historical achievement. The philosophical meaning of Freud's intervention is to show us that the task of unifying the soul is much more demanding – demanding *conceptually speaking*, not just in terms of psychic exercises – than Socrates or Plato could have imagined. It is not simply a matter of bringing unruly appetitive desires under control – or even a matter of bringing them to consciousness, and then under control. It requires integrating two different modes of apperceptive self-consciousness. It seems to me that we are at the beginning stage, historically speaking,

⁷ In an important sense, there is no *self* there yet to be satisfied or dissatisfied. As Socrates said of the oligarchical personality, he is *diplous tis*, something double (Plato, *Republic* VIII, 554e).

of understanding what it might mean to do this. But we cannot adequately understand what the satisfaction consists in until we know how to bring both modes of self-consciousness together into a genuine *self-consciousness*.

But with a century of psychoanalytic practice under our belts, we do know enough to cast doubt on Hegel's claim that self-consciousness finds satisfaction only in another self-consciousness. For it shows that psychic integration is not additive – it is not a matter simply of bringing two modes of self-consciousness together – but rather consists in developing a *practical* capacity of mind that transforms both. Over time, the self-conscious understanding of one's own structure of disappointment becomes itself efficacious, immediately and directly, in taking that structure apart. My theoretical understanding that "I tend to view the world as disappointing" is secondary. What matters is my immediate apperceptive consciousness in the here and now that I am actively interpreting the world thus – and my growing ability to change the manner of thinking immediately and directly through my active, apperceptive understanding of what my thinking is. This is the development of a practical capacity of mind to change the structure of one's mind.

As one breaks apart the structure of disappointment that had until that moment insidiously shaped one's life, there likely arises a question of what one is to make of the categories and concepts one inhabits – say, being a professor – that had, until now, seemed part and parcel of the disappointing world. This is the process Freud called "working-through." The structure of alienation from the social categories with which one is understood itself comes in for question. I believe that what, from a psychological perspective, is an integration of these two modes of self-consciousness shows up in our life with concepts as the development of a capacity for irony. Part of what it is to *be* a professor is to gain some distance from the public understanding in terms of which recognition is bestowed, if only to return to the familiar forms in such a way as to be able to take genuine satisfaction in them. It is commonly assumed that the concept *professor* is a "social construct" and that, as such, the application conditions are settled by social recognition. It is this inference that becomes questionable as we take seriously the unification of self-consciousness.

12 Ever since Plato at least, philosophers have turned to analogies, metaphors, and myths – the Cave, the myth of Er, the dialectic of Master and Slave – when they wanted to approach a topic they believed they were not in a position fully to comprehend. In that spirit, I would like to conclude this essay with a meditation on the Sabbath.

Why didn't God make the week six days long? After all, that is the time of creation. If we are created in His image, why didn't he leave it at that? We are on earth to be creators. He took a rest afterward, but so what? Obviously, that is not how God saw things. Not only must we rest on the seventh day, we must *honor* that rest, remember it and do our best to make the Sabbath holy. This is an astonishing understanding of who we are, but I want to focus on the unity and integrity of the week. The seventh day is so utterly different from the first six that, at least from some perspective, it is hard to see how they could all fit together; yet, it is only with all seven of them that the week becomes integrated.

Without the Sabbath, we might continue with the social form, but it would only be as a matter of convenience – a remnant from the past that we did not yet have reason to question or abandon. (Why has there not sprung up a European political party dedicated to bringing the temporal units we live by into the metric system?) Ironically, as different as the Sabbath day is from the other days, it is that difference that makes for the genuine unity of the week. Our question is – and it is a practical question: Can we do for the human psyche what God did for the week? That is, can we create a genuine unity from these normal workday and Sabbath modes of self-consciousness?

To answer that question, we would need to know what it is to honor the Sabbath mode of self-consciousness. It is worth noting that when it comes to the Sabbath, it is internal to our use of the concept that no one else can settle for me whether or not I have honored it. It is evidently not sufficient to go through any of the social forms in terms of which public recognition might be achieved. This does not mean there is some private internal something only I can consult. Again, to settle my own question of whether I have honored the Sabbath, I may work *through* the recognition of others: I may have conversations with friends and clergy, go into analysis again, read books of great authors such as Kierkegaard, and so on. But I could never find satisfaction for my understanding of myself as honoring the Sabbath *in* another self-consciousness. This is a conceptual matter, not merely a psychological one.

Now, what would it be to honor the Sabbath moment internal to my life as a professor? This is one way of asking what it would be to integrate the distinct modes of apperceptive self-consciousness. At the very least, it would involve recognizing that the normal conditions of satisfaction for normal apperceptive self-consciousness are not themselves sufficient for validating my self-understanding as a professor. I must of course work *through* the systems of public recognition – denied tenure I cannot legitimately hold on to such self-understanding – but if I am to incorporate the

Sabbath mode, I can no longer think of my self-understanding as resting *in* such recognition.

But then how can one tell the difference between appearance and reality here? What check is there on fantasies of an authentic life in which one has integrated the disparate modes of self-consciousness? The gloomy way to look at it is there is none. The more cheerful way to look at it is *there is none!* This is a manifestation of the way things are and must be; in the end, it ought to be celebrated. Of course, I can employ “reality checks”: There are people I can talk to, novels and poems I can read, I can go back into analysis, I can use various slip-ups as telltale signs, and so on, but they all can take me only so far. It is a manifestation of our finite life with concepts – that is, of our life with concepts – that is, of our life as apperceptive self-conscious beings – that while the satisfaction of self-consciousness must inevitably run *through*, it can never be found *in* another self-consciousness. One upshot of the Freudian intervention is that we need to change the preposition in Hegel’s famous dictum.

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